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Coffee, Detergents, and Journalists

OFTEN, WHEN we in the media are invited to speak, audiences pepper us with questions on our role in society, how we operate, and the rules and ethical standards that govern us. I take this as a positive sign: the public is interested in what we do, they want to know more about us, and hopefully will not let us off their radar screens.

During such occasions, I share as much of our world as I can. After all, we—whose job is to make institutions and officials accountable—should be held accountable as well.

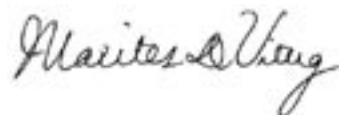
If there is one thing we in NEWSBREAK advocate, it is media literacy: letting the public in on our profession. Only when readers, TV viewers, and radio listeners know us inside out can they ask the hard questions and make demands so that we keep to the highest standards of journalism.

This requires transparency on our part. Thus media, for us, is as important a subject for coverage as government and politics. Chay Florentino Hofileña, our media chronicler and press critic, takes us once more to the newsroom. This time, she examines an ethical issue: can journalists endorse products? Is it okay for TV news anchors to promote detergents or coffee?

After reading this thoughtful piece, “When Newscasters Sell,” do send us your feedback: letters@newsbreak.com.ph.

Meanwhile, in this issue, we introduce two things: a column, “Off Duty,” to be rotated among members of the editorial staff. It will be our observation post, where we will share stuff that do not find their way into our stories; and a regular Sudoku section. Take a break with this mind game.

Enjoy these new offerings and the rest of the magazine.



You can reach Marites Dañguilan Vitug at: marites@newsbreak.com.ph

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As a product endorser, Arnold Clavio treads the thin line between journalism and commerce.



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Filipino painter Ben Cabrera (center) is shortlisted for the National Artist awards (visual arts).

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Conquer the land of pharaohs, and don't miss that felucca ride on the Nile.

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ABOUT THE COVER: Broadcasters Mike Enriquez and Arnold Clavio are top product endorers, too. Main Cover Photographs by Luis Liwanag; Jose Enrique Soriano/Silverlens (Singapore sex worker).

Magandang araw mula sa San Miguel

Sa pagsisikap, natutupad ang maraming pangarap. Alam ng San Miguel ito. Kaya naman sinisikap nito na gawing mas masarap, mas maginhawa ang bawat araw. Hinataguyod ang mga programang nakatutulong sa pagpapaligid ng buhay at kabuhayan. Tula ng "Operation Linis Taal" sa Batangas na nangangalaga sa kalusugan ng mga isda doon. At ang "Tulong-tulong sa Tullahan" na muling binubuhay ang Tullahan River para sa kapakanan ng mga taga-Malabon at Valenzuela. At siyempre, mahusay na gumagawa ang San Miguel Corporation ng mga de-kalidad at abot-kayang mga produkto para sa bawat Pilipino.



SAN MIGUEL CORPORATION

ARCHIVES, PLEASE

CONGRATULATIONS TO NEWSBREAK for getting its own Web site. We hope full online access to the current issue and your archives will soon become available. NEWSBREAK has become an invaluable tool in filling the large gaps in traditional coverage of the Philippines, especially in providing thematic coverage and analyses often lacking in mainstream Philippine media.

I have referred some of the magazine's more interesting articles to outside observers so that they can gain a coherent understanding of Philippine events. Particularly useful over the past year has been NEWSBREAK's piecing together of stories and events to paint a picture of how election fraud may have taken place in 2004.

ROBERTO M. HERRERA-LIM

*Analyst, Asia
Eurasia Group
New York*

NOT JUST A RED SCARE

I AM impressed by NEWSBREAK's inside story of the foiled coup ("Romancing the Military," March 27, 2006). Taken as a whole, the articles provide the readers a big picture of the dynamics and complexities in the game of power in our country's political setting.

Nevertheless, there are debatable issues, such as the "military missing the big picture," and the Palace being "caught by surprise." These claims don't sit well with those who knew what really happened. The intelligence community, the AFP top leadership, and the Palace had the situational awareness of what was happening and what lay ahead.

I urge our discerning readers to critically observe what is happening in our midst in these dangerous times. The historian Samuel Eisenstadt argues that "the key to revolution lies in the combination of diverse movements...in time of crises into widespread attacks on the institutions of the old regime."

This explains the alliance formation of various opposition groups to oust GMA and the recent unholy pact between mutinous soldiers and the local communists. Of course, the Left has always been there, playing the support role, in EDSA 1, EDSA 2 and the bungled and infamous EDSA 3. The Left learned its lessons, and this time, it would play a major role, if not the lead role, in the oust-GMA movement.

The failure or inability or unwillingness of the government or its agents to deal with



the crises (such as economic, military or political problems), rather than the actions of the opposition, would cause its downfall. The opposition's moves would only precipitate or exacerbate the dissent or grievances within the society or government institution. But it's the government's decisive actions against extant threats that would spell the difference between its survival and defeat.

The fall of President Marcos and President Estrada are typical examples. On the other hand, the present government

struck decisively through timely arrests of renegade Armed Forces officers and the proclamation of the state of national emergency. These bold moves, albeit unpopular, surprised the opposition groups and preempted the coup. This is a game of actions and counteractions.

If and when the different contending opposition groups succeed to oust GMA, the question is, who will become the extremists—the Reds or the renegade soldiers? Between them, who has more guts and callousness to implement so-called extreme measures? The obvious endgame is for them to eliminate each other. This is not the old-fashioned Red scare. This is real!

LT. COL. CARLOS QUITA
Philippine Army

MOST OUTSTANDING STORY ON CHILDREN

NEWSBREAK's story, "The Forgotten Children," was judged the Most Outstanding Story on Children by the UNICEF-Philippine Press Institute's Child-Friendly Newspaper and Journalist Award last April 23.



Written by contributor Mylah Roque and published on April 11, 2005, the story was described as "an exceptionally

well-written article that vividly depicts the plight of Filipino minors in conflict with the law, promoting awareness and understanding of the rights of these children."

INSPIRED LOCAL EXECS

ON BEHALF of the League of Cities of the Philippines, I would like to commend you for coming up with the cover story (NEWSBREAK, April 24, 2006) "The Outstanding 6," featuring five city mayors who have proven themselves to be the best leaders in their respective cities. We take this story as an inspiration for other local chief executives to become good public managers and to value good governance and transparency in their public service.

GIL-FERNANDO C. CRUZ
*Executive Director
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Malate, Manila*

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR, WITH THE WRITER'S FULL NAME AND ADDRESS, SHOULD BE E-MAILED TO: letters@newsbreak.com.ph, FAXED TO (632) 687-5528, OR SENT TO NEWSBREAK, Unit 502, Gabriel III, Amethyst Drive, Ortigas Center, Pasig City 1600 Philippines. LETTERS ARE EDITED FOR LENGTH.

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RELUCTANT SPOKESMAN

NO LESS than his own lawyer, Theodore Te, was surprised when Army 1Lt. Sonny Sarmiento surfaced as spokesperson of the rebel group Magdalo, re-christened Makabayang Kawal Pilipino (MKP).

"Personally, he would be the last person I would've expected to be spokesman. He's quiet and reserved, a man of few words," Te told *Probe*, which ran an exclusive interview with the fugitive officer last April 20.

In his first one-on-one TV interview with *Probe's* Cheche Lazaro, Sarmiento was sweating and visibly uncomfortable. At times, he groped for words. And when the words came out, they didn't match the fire that drives him and others to rebel.

The 29-year-old Sarmiento, who has a P500,000 bounty on his head, took the place of Scout Ranger lieutenant Lawrence San Juan, the military underground movement's poster boy of protest until his arrest last February 21. The two officers, along with two others, bolted their detention center in Fort Bonifacio in January.

Sarmiento warned in the interview that they would make their presence felt in the coming days. As to how, he didn't say.

The new rebel spokesman was trim and fit. He looked better in person than in the picture on the Army's "Wanted" poster. Informants might not even recognize him.

—Booma Cruz



COURTESY OF THE PROBE TEAM

THE SILENT INDUSTRY

BANISH THOSE pictures of exotic vineyards in some faraway country the next time you buy grapes. Those grapes you just bought may have come 300 kilometers north of Manila.

For 34 years now, La Union has been producing tons of red and green grapes.

It's a silent industry, the produce of which finds its way to dinner tables all over the country, probably including yours, but very few are aware of it.

The grapes of La Union began as a hobby of one man, agriculturist Avelino Lomboy. It began in 1972, with a few cuttings he bought from California. The 20 vines he planted in his backyard were so fruitful and prolific he braved converting several hectares of farmlands into vineyards.

The industry spread to other parts of the Ilocos region. At one time, the whole region had some 500 hectares planted to Brazilian, Black Rivier and Cardinal grapes.



Then import liberalization came and the number of buyers shrunk. The market was being flooded with cheaper table grapes. The vineyard owners of La Union shifted gears and planted other high-value crops.

These days, only 15 hectares of vineyards remain, all of them in Bauang town, producing some 15 to 20 tons of grapes a year.

It remains a lucrative business. Each vine can produce as many as 20 kilos of berries per harvest, three times a year. Middlemen from Manila, Baguio, and Cebu flock to Bauang during harvest time. Red grapes fetch a farm gate price of P90 a kilo, the green ones at P60 a kilo.

"Customers think the red ones are sweeter," says Ramos, but the verdict, he says, is only



COURTESY OF LOVELY DAY GMA-7



skin-deep. The two are actually not far off in sweetness.

"Our climate is perfect for vineyards," says Lomboy. He says grapes love the sun, debunking the notion that these grow only in cold climates.

IN SEARCH OF THE 'MIDDLE WAY'

THE PRESENCE of Nobel peace prize-winner Jose Ramos-Horta, senior minister for foreign affairs of a country (East Timor) that faces no terror problem, as the main speaker in a counterterrorism conference said much about the meeting. Entitled "Defeating Dilemmas in Counterterrorism," the so-called experts' conference hosted by the Philippine government last month in Cebu aimed to look for a middle ground in fighting terrorism, away from the "hard approach" exemplified by the military wars of the US, first in Afghanistan and then in Iraq.

Ramos-Horta's message was clear: "We must not become monsters ourselves in order to defeat the monster; states must not sanction state terror to fight terror."

Asked if the theme of the conference was

anti-US, he replied that the US is "effective" in what it does and that we shouldn't always think in terms of US policy.

The recently released US national security strategy (March 2006) was unequivocal in its strategy to defeat terrorism: "In the short run, the fight involves using military force...to kill or capture the terrorists, deny them safe haven...and cut off their sources of support. In the long run, winning the war on terror means winning the battle of ideas."

The US has defined its war on terror in stages. Does this fall within the "middle way"? Manu Bhalla of the US State Department said that the issue might be one of "nomenclature."

Other participants found the idea of a "middle way" fuzzy. "Is it a framework, a strategy, or a set of tactics?" asked a university professor from



Most vineyards abroad are able to harvest just once annually, owing to the four seasons they have, while the Philippines' near-constant summer allows harvest thrice a year.

How would a consumer know if grapes are raised locally?

Lomboy has one tip: the stems of imported grapes are brown, due to the chemicals sprayed on them before they are shipped. The ones from La Union did not require such a process, hence the stems are green.

—Jaileen Jimeno

A CHESS STAR IS BORN

THE COUNTRY'S brightest chess star just finished grade six at the St. Francis of Assisi College System in Cavite. But the 12-year-old Wesley So does not want his parents to tell people of his exploits, the latest being the youngest member of the six-man national team going to May's Chess Olympiad in Turin, Italy.

"Wesley does not want us to boast to our friends and neighbors," said Leny, the boy's mother in an e-mailed answer after her son qualified for the Olympiad team following a grueling playoff last April 17 to 18 in Tagaytay City.

Wesley is expected to be second reserve for the Philippine team, and his parents say the Turin Olympiad will be a learning experience for him.

Just watch him in action and there's no doubting his huge promise. En route to clobbering grandmaster candidate Jayson Gonzales in the



penultimate game of the 11-round national championship in Mandaluyong before the Holy Week, Wesley stood up and watched other games in progress with a self-confident gait. He even found time to listen to a conversation between two officials.

Eugene Torre, Asia's first grandmaster, said Wesley can go places. "At his age, he is serious and loves the game. He plays solidly and seldom loses and more importantly, he can study on his own," said Torre.

Wesley is the second child of Leny, who works at the De La Salle Health Services Campus in Cavite, and businessman William, who accompanies his son in tournaments. Wesley learned to play at the age of six, and nearly two years later, he began winning age-group tournaments, 10 of them in 2003. At home, Leny says Wesley is just an ordinary teenager. "He is helpful in housework and in errands."

So's potential showed itself in 2004 when he became the youngest finalist in the national chess championship at age 11. He only finished eighth, but he defeated a lot of strong players. He tied for first to fourth in the World Under-12 championship last year in France. He failed to make it in the Southeast Asian Games. Now a new star is born.

But history is full of many prodigies who did not fulfill their promise. Chess fans are anxiously waiting if So and his family can meet this challenge. —**Joseph Dizon**



Asia. Some foreign delegates told **NEWSBREAK** they came "to understand what it's [middle way] all about. It may just be a matter of repackaging [existing strategies]."

For Davao City Mayor Rodrigo Duterte, the "middle way" is simply "following the law" in the pursuit of terrorists. This means, among others, upholding human rights.

The Philippines may have started a provocative discussion by hosting such meeting, organized by retired Gen. Benjamin Defensor, chairman of the APEC Counterterrorism Task Force. Borne out of a commitment of President Arroyo to President George W. Bush during the APEC summit in Busan last year, the conference, however, failed to clarify the concept of a "middle way," even among officials of the host country.

The result of the conference, a one-page declaration of principles, doesn't bind governments and it won't be taken up in a future APEC meeting.

So what was it all about? "If there's a global war on terror," says a Philippine delegate, "this one's a global talk on terror."

—**Marites Dañguilan Vitug in Cebu**

And they said...

"May he continue to be healthy or have better health, and we also wish that he would continue to be handsome."

*Press Secretary **IGNACIO BUNYE**, on his birthday wishes for former President Joseph Estrada*



"We have a whole system worked out. It's the B and B—she does the breast feeding and I do the burping and changing the diapers."

*Actor **TOM CRUISE** on wife Katie Holmes, after the birth of their daughter*

"[It] has no place in our legal firmament and must be struck down as darkness that shrouds freedom. It merely confuses our people and is used by some police agents to justify abuses."

***THE SUPREME COURT**, in a unanimous decision on the government's calibrated preemptive response policy*



WHAT? NO MORE CONDOMS?

The government's biggest contraceptive donor, USAID, has stopped distributing condoms in Philippine health centers since 2003. This year, rich cities like Makati and provinces like Ilocos Norte stopped receiving donated pills, too. By 2008, contraceptive donations shall have stopped except in the poorest areas, which will receive injectable contraceptives only.

The government has been enjoying a free supply of contraceptives since the 1970s. "Our family planning program had always worked on the contraceptive donations provided by the USAID," said Rosalinda Marcelino, Population Commission's regional director in the National Capital Region. Since then, there has been an increased acceptance of family planning in the country, she said. With greater awareness, "it is easier to motivate people to go to the clinics" for information on family planning methods.

The downside, however, is that free supply caused the government to become "too dependent" on donations, she said. "We only promote what contraceptives the USAID donates to us. The choices are limited."

What USAID wants now is for the government and the private sector to assume the responsibility. The phase-down was announced in 1999.

It's going to be expensive. Local officials who will take on family planning as a cause will now have to say it with money. If they support family planning, they will have to allocate funds for contraceptives; if they don't support the program, their health clinics will not have the supply. Dr. Honorata Catibog of the Department of Health (DOH) estimated that P1 billion would be needed to have enough contraceptives in health clinics.

Several cities have answered the call and set aside the needed sums. In 2005, Makati, Quezon City, and Marikina allocated P1.85 million, P1.5 million, and P600,000, respectively. This one you can't expect from Manila Mayor Lito Atienza. In a seminar with the bishops and DOH representatives early this year, he declared that anyone who advocated family planning in his city was going to be his enemy.

—**Carmela Fonbuena**

THE WITNESS

It was a chance for lawyers, the subjects of our stories, to make a journalist their subject

By **MARITES DAÑGUILAN VITUG**

IHAVE watched countless movies and television dramas with courtroom scenes. Lawyers badger and intimidate witnesses who then break down and cry. Or witnesses outsmart lawyers.

Yet all this did not prepare me for my first experience as a witness. In my close to 30 years in journalism, I've never taken the witness stand. All the libel cases that have been filed against me or, in the last five years, against NEWSBREAK have kept me out of the courtroom.

So how did I end up on the witness stand? It took a libel case against another journalist to break me in.

Recently, to my surprise, I received a subpoena from a Makati court judge asking me to testify in a libel case filed by F. Arthur "Pancho" Villaraza against *Daily Tribune* editor Niñez Cachco Olivares. Only one thing was clear: I was to present to the court a copy of the NEWSBREAK issue where our story on the Villaraza and Angangco law firm appeared ("Firmly in Power" by Chay Florentino Hofileña, September 2002).

Here's a bit of background: Villaraza, head of the Villaraza and Angangco law office, more popularly known as The Firm, filed 48 libel cases versus Olivares in 2003 for a story on his alleged acceptance of bribe money in connection with a major airport terminal construction project.

Our story on The Firm was, in essence, what the subtitle said: "The Villaraza law firm's tentacles extend to the judiciary and the executive."

It baffled me that if a single issue of the magazine was all they wanted, why did I have to deliver it personally? Besides, no lawyer gave me a heads up on this. And on whose behalf was I going to testify?

After a few calls to the court, I found out that it was Olivares's lawyer who wanted me there. I reached him on his cell phone and I chided him for keeping me in the dark about this sudden appearance. He was desperate, he said, and he offered his apologies. He said that all I had to do was answer a few questions about the magazine. In effect, I was going to assure the court that we were not some flaky, fly-by-night publication.

I thought I was up to the job—but not for long. The central issue for the prosecution was my competence as a witness.

I was only an editor, they said; I didn't write the story. What gave me the right to judge what issues are of public interest? What credentials did I bring to my work to make such vital decisions?

I was fair game. This was a chance for lawyers, the subjects of our stories, to make a journalist their subject.

I think I heard the word "incompetent" (referring to me as a witness) fly back a number of times between the two sides. This was not some therapy or criticism-self-criticism session where a psychiatrist says what's wrong with you and then you're supposed to admit to personality flaws. But it could have passed for one.

This buttressed my fear that courts can be unfriendly territory—one of the last places I would like to be in.

In between the lawyers' exchanges, I tried to make my point that we wrote about The Firm because the leading personalities there had joined government and had become public figures. They were perceived to have influenced government appointments.

Whew! I was able to sneak that in.

If there's one thing that I took away from this experience, it's this: lawyers complicate things while journalists simplify. ■



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BRINGING OUT THE BEST IN HER BOSS

The President's "director" would rather stay behind the camera, out of public view



By MIA M. GONZALEZ

BEFORE PRESIDENT Arroyo's occasional televised roundtable dialogue with select officials at the Kalayaan Hall Press Briefing Room in Malacañang, Lupita Aquino Kashiwahara could be seen finger-framing the spots where the Chief Executive would be photographed by the media. She would move chairs, replace potted plants, alter the lighting—anything to achieve picture perfection.

Kashiwahara became the President's "personal director" after working in the 2004 presidential campaign. Since that time, she has been involved in all productions involving Mrs. Arroyo, including her provincial engagements and Metro Manila sorties.

Milton Alingod, head of Radio TV Malacañang (RTVM), said Kashiwahara deals with the technical aspects of presidential activities like the televised roundtable discussions, photo opportunities, and taped messages. She also directed the documentaries about the latest foiled coup against the

President, *Kataksilan sa Bayan* and *Sabwatan sa Kataksilan*, both justifying the decision to declare a state of national emergency on February 24.

Alingod said Kashiwahara, best known for her Famas award-winning direction of *Minsa'y Isang Gamu-Gamu* and the Balintataw TV series, is "very innovative," consistent with her reputation as a perfectionist. Married to an American journalist, she is the younger sister of the late Sen. Benigno Aquino Jr.

"She is not easily satisfied. She always looks for a better way of doing things. She's



TV CREWS COVERING THE PRESIDENT GET A SUMPTUOUS VISUAL BUFFET, THANKS TO LUPITA KASHIWAHARA

Malacañang. One time, the teenage Reli and Butz danced with Lupita and her sister Ditas. Lupita was dismayed to see the two boys struggling to dance the boogie and proceeded to teach them how to do it.

FEISTY, GO-GO LADY

German, who works on special projects for Malacañang, describes his one-time dance teacher as “vibrant,” a quality reflected in both her actions and words. “She talks in rapid-fire fashion because she’s brimming with ideas. She’s a go-go-go lady. *Mapusok*, feisty. She speaks her mind.”

He believes Kashiwahara’s presence in Malacañang helps Ms. Arroyo because she is not intimidated by the Chief Executive and so “she doesn’t hold back” and says what’s on her mind. “In Malacañang, we need somebody like that who is not going to hesitate to call a spade a spade.”

A Palace source said Kashiwahara was one of those who were “very vocal” about the phrasing of the President’s infamous “I am sorry” statement on June 27, 2005. In a Palace meeting before the televised speech, Kashiwahara said the statement must not be melodramatic and must “cut to the bone.” Still, when other people gave reasonable counter-arguments, she backed off and listened.

Kashiwahara has been credited with “re-formatting” Ms. Arroyo’s image. German said the President used to be portrayed and perceived as *mataray*, who would scold officials publicly. He believed that Kashiwahara helped present a calmer, though still hardworking, Chief Executive. “Her contribution is a positive development,” he said. Alingod agreed. “She makes the President feel relaxed.”

Alingod said Kashiwahara also helps the President in pacing her statements, and infusing her delivery with “feelings, intonation.” The President is so comfortable with Kashiwahara that she doesn’t mind when the latter walks to her and straightens her clothes before Ms. Arroyo faces the media. The President doesn’t mind, either, when Kashiwahara tells her, “Ma’am, it shouldn’t be like that. It should be this way,” before a televised appearance.

In news columns and blogs, she has been alternately described as the President’s “image maker” and “PR consultant,” monikers she reportedly dislikes. “One thing she hates is to be dubbed the President’s handler,” said a Palace reporter. But the perception remains, and it may not be entirely untrue. (Kashiwahara declined to be interviewed.)

At the height of the political crisis last

year, Kashiwahara was seen literally guiding Mrs. Arroyo through her infamous Sunday stroll along Baywalk with members of her family. With Kashiwahara’s direction, Ms. Arroyo was hardly the picture of despair even if she had just lost 10 Cabinet members through resignations and faced her toughest political test.

Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita said of Kashiwahara’s role in Malacañang: “What should be the proper conduct [of the President] under different situations? We are not aware that that is important, including her appearance on TV, her clothes, her demeanor. That is the value of Ms. Kashiwahara. She has experience in that field and the President believes in her.”

PHOTO BUFFET

“She really knows the job and she has the ear of the President so the President considers very seriously the advice she gives,” said Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye. He said the President even follows Kashiwahara’s suggested “expressions and gestures” and that after each session, she gives feedback to the Chief Executive on what she did well and what needed improvement.

This is part of Kashiwahara’s meticulous nature. One reporter said there used to be “uncoordinated” media events that left TV crews with poor videos showing Mrs. Arroyo covered by her security detail. Now, it’s like a sumptuous video and photo buffet.

Sometimes you can even order a la carte. The media would suggest good photo opportunities at coverage venues, which Kashiwahara would coordinate. She would make helpful suggestions to them, even peering through the lens of TV cameras to see if the shot would be good or not. “If you have something interesting to cover, she won’t hesitate to find a way to do it for you,” said another reporter who was among those who missed an interview with Palace executive chef Babes Austria, who had presented to Manny Pacquiao an *empanada* shaped like a boxer’s glove.

On request, Kashiwahara arranged a “take two” of the interview for reporters who were then at another presidential engagement. Alingod said that Kashiwahara is generous with her praises to the RTVM staff and the media.

But she also lets the private media know that she wishes exclusion from photos and videos of presidential engagements.

The director that she is, she would rather stay behind the camera, out of public view. ■



PARTNERS BEHIND THE SCENES: Lupita Kashiwahara (above, left) and her boss President Arroyo

demanding in the sense that she wants everyone to be at his best. She believes that people can improve on their work,” Alingod said.

An RTVM staff member who asked not to be named said Kashiwahara makes changes on set details that are likely to be overlooked by others, like a bent branch in a floral arrangement. She had white drapes hung on parts of the briefing room walls to cover the royal blue panels, just to make the President look her best. Kashiwahara also advises the President on what to wear, apparently for better register on video and photos.

Bringing out the best in people seems to be innate in Kashiwahara, who is in her 60s. Media consultant Reli German remembers this from his teenage years, when he still hung out with Lupita’s younger brother, Makati Rep. Agapito “Butz” Aquino, in the Aquinos’ ancestral home in San Rafael,

DAVIDE'S POLL REFORM PACKAGE

Political will and *delicadeza* are needed to cleanse the electoral system

By **ARIES RUFO**

FORMER CHIEF Justice Hilario Davide Jr. has submitted to President Arroyo an election reform package that, on the whole, can be implemented with enough political will and a sense of *delicadeza* of the President and the election commissioners.

From two sources privy to Davide's consultations with civil society groups, **NEWSBREAK** learned of at least 10 of Davide's recommendations. We sought the inputs of Commission on Elections (COMELEC) Executive Secretary Jose Pio Joson, former poll commissioner and present Court of Appeals justice Regalado Maambong, and an election watchdog lawyer in assessing Davide's reform package.

Davide's recommendations:

■ The immediate resolution of the COMELEC's credibility problem. Davide wants, at least, the appointment of a new chair and, at most, the courtesy resignations of the entire poll body. He hinted that, for this to be done, the President must exercise political will.

Critique: This recommendation can be ignored by the poll body. After all, the commissioners have constitutionally mandated terms and may be removed from office only through impeachment. COMELEC chief Benjamin Abalos knows that he loses his immunity once he resigns. A case pending with the Ombudsman has linked Abalos to the allegedly flawed Megapacific deal.

■ The expeditious release of the Ombudsman's report on the Megapacific deal. (**NEWSBREAK** published excerpts from the Ombudsman's investigation. See www.newsbreak.com.ph)

Critique: This would require political will on the President's part and hinges to a large extent on Ombudsman Merceditas Gutierrez, who still has to act on the report.

■ The President should solicit names from the opposition for nominees to the COMELEC.

Critique: Then President Corazon Aquino did this when she named Maambong as the opposition's representative in a post-EDSA COMELEC. A close friend of Imelda Marcos, Maambong is a former Cebu assemblyman under the Kilusang ng Bagong Lipunan, Marcos' political party. Ms. Aquino's suc-

cessors, by contrast, packed the commission with their allies.

■ The Comelec commissioners need not all be lawyers. Some of them may be experts on information technology or management.

Critique: The only non-lawyer to have been appointed an election commissioner so far was Luzviminda Tancangco, who came from the academe. Her stint, however, was marred by allegations of mismanagement and corruption.



NEWSBREAK FILE

An election lawyer notes that the Constitution only provides that the majority of commissioners should be lawyers, in recognition of the COMELEC's dual role as adjudicator and administrator. Maambong says the proposal makes sense since "85 percent of COMELEC job is management anyway."

■ Nominees to the COMELEC should not assume their posts before they are confirmed by the bicameral Commission on Appointments.

Critique: Maambong recalls that he and former COMELEC chair Christian Monsod observed this when Aquino appointed them. They did this, he says, as a matter of *delicadeza* and to avoid suggestions that they could be pressured by politicians to do their bidding while facing confirmation hearings.

■ The modernization law on the conduct of elections should not be procurement-specific. Automation should be done phase by phase. The present COMELEC should not handle automation.

Critique: Joson says the present modernization law (RA 8436) is outdated and should be replaced by one mandating electronic voting. The law also appears tailor-made to suit a particular voting machine, limiting choices of better equipment.

■ In the presidential elections, the COMELEC should do away with the municipal canvass.

Critique: Doing away with the municipal canvass would only create a huge traffic in the provincial canvass, resulting in chaos and more delay, says Joson.

Maambong agrees that this proposal would create a messier provincial canvass. "If one province has 40,000 precincts, imagine how long that would take to canvass at the provincial level. There is more opportunity to commit fraud." Maambong doubts if this proposal was even considered by Davide.

■ Institutionalize the system of continuing voter's registration.

Critique: The COMELEC has been holding continuing registration. The problem is that political parties have abdicated their role of questioning the voters' list to purge questionable entries.

■ Establish an independent committee similar to the Feliciano Commission to review all electoral reform proposals.

Maambong and Joson have reservations about this recommendation. They believe it would only create another layer in the reform agenda.

■ Voter education should be made a part of the curriculum at all school levels.

Critique: Maambong suggests legislation specifically mandating the Department of Education to act on the matter.

The COMELEC has seen better days. Under Monsod, the poll body pursued key reform measures, two of which are now in place: the laws on the party list and on absentee voting. Both are now enshrined in the Constitution.

With Malacanang's reluctance to even disclose Davide's recommendations, there's no telling if the administration wants these reforms pursued. ■

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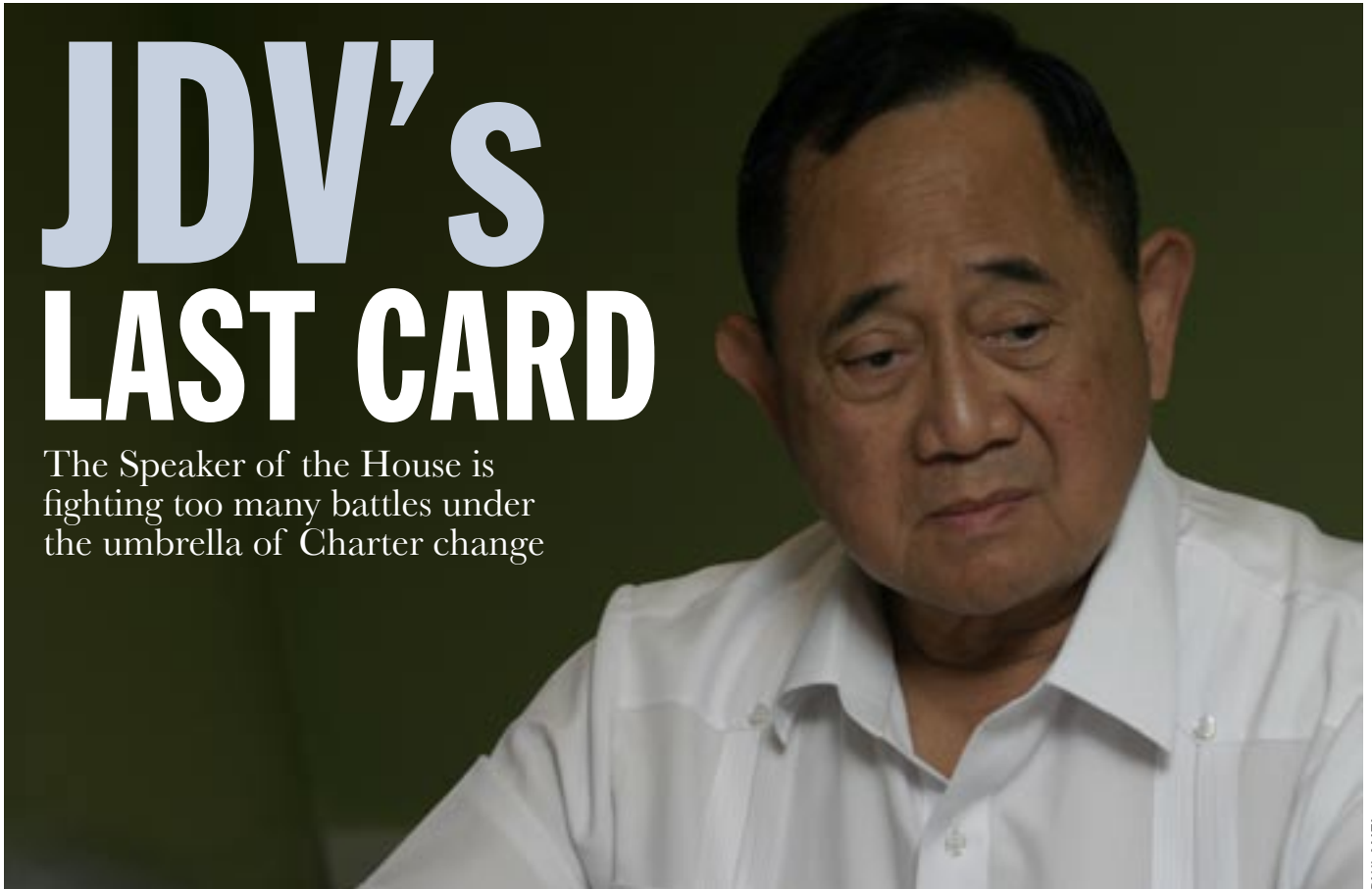
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JDV'S LAST CARD

The Speaker of the House is fighting too many battles under the umbrella of Charter change



PAUL MATA

By MIRIAM GRACE A. GO

IN JANUARY, while the camp of Speaker Jose de Venecia Jr. was busy preparing for the launch of a people's initiative to amend the Constitution, Antipolo City Rep. Ronaldo Puno was studying numbers for another signature-gathering campaign. Puno, who heads President Arroyo's original party Kabalikang Malayang Pilipino (KAMP), was said to be close to getting the majority of congressmen vote for him as Speaker of the House in case of a coup against De Venecia.

That's why the following month, according to a strategist working with De Venecia, the latter "advised" the President to appoint Puno as secretary of the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG). The idea was sold thus: Puno, given his extensive network with local officials and his past stint at the department, would be able to fast track the gathering of signatures for a people's initiative (PI) at the local level.

With Puno's transfer to the DILG, a threat to De Venecia's speakership was demolished. This could be temporary, however. From accounts of various administration sources, including those working with De Venecia and with Puno, De Venecia may have created bigger threats to his political plans.

The common observation is that De

Venecia wants to stay Speaker to have as much control as possible over the process of amending the Constitution, and to be prime minister in the event that his pet amendment, the changing of the form of government to a parliamentary one, is achieved.

In an interview with **NEWSBREAK**, the Speaker denied that he's pushing for a unicameral parliament so that he could be a very powerful prime minister. He won't turn his back on the opportunity, he said, but he is "not seeking" the position actively either. Political stability and economic progress are his overarching goals in campaigning hard for charter change, which, to be fair, has been part of the party platform of Lakas-Christian Muslim Democrats from the time he co-founded it in 1992.

De Venecia also dismissed the general belief that he is a shoo-in for prime minister. He pointed out that although he's been elected Speaker for several terms now, the interim parliament he envisions to be in place by July will include not just the congressmen but the incumbent senators and Cabinet secretaries as well. They are qualified candidates for prime minister, too, De Venecia said.

De Venecia has always preferred a constituent assembly (CA), the least costly and quickest way of introducing as many amendments to the Constitution as possible. It's also the process he can control the most. The CA option had to be ruled out, however, because the Senate refuses to sit with the House to study possible amendments.

RELYING ON JDV

Thus, De Venecia had to resort to the people's initiative. If the yes votes win, the present Congress will be turned into an interim parliament that will introduce more wide-ranging amendments to the Constitution, most likely the ones in the draft already prepared by the current House committee on constitutional amendments.

Administration sources acknowledge that as far as the Charter change campaign is con-

cerned, the President relies on De Venecia's strategy. Four sources, one of them directly involved in the people's initiative campaign, indicated that moving Puno to the DILG to "help" in the PI campaign wasn't part of the original plan. In fact, there was no need to transfer him to the DILG to ensure the success of the PI, for two reasons.

One, Puno could have been an effective campaigner even as a congressman. His KAMPI partymates in the House were among the more aggressive supporters of a PI when it became clear to them that it would be impossible to convene a CA. Two, De Venecia has tapped people closely associated with him for the PI, so it's easier for him to coordinate with the group to ensure their success.

The spokesman of Sigaw ng Bayan, the group at the forefront of the signature-gathering campaign, is lawyer Raul Lambino. A fellow Pangasinense, he was consultant to the Speaker's office, and was recommended by De Venecia to be named to the presidential consultative commission (CONCOM). At the CONCOM, Lambino argued for the controversial proposals that De Venecia was pushing: abolition of the Senate, clipping of the Supreme Court's powers, and cancellation of the 2007 polls. Lambino is now part of the Malacañang-funded advocacy commission, which is making the rounds of provinces for an information drive on Charter change.

Ronnie Puno has hijacked the people's initiative campaign to his advantage—which is to delay it and ensure elections in 2007



Those working for Puno say that De Venecia's play isn't lost on Puno. They say Puno accepted the DILG post as a good soldier of the President, but he intends to run for Antipolo congressman again in 2007. Puno said as much in a TV interview in late February.

Elections in 2007? That's not part of De Venecia's plan either. The Speaker's camp got local officials working for the success of the PI with the promise that the interim parliament will pass a law canceling the scheduled polls of 2007, effectively extending their term of office.

PUNO'S AGENDA

At least two sources close to De Venecia acknowledge that Puno has "hijacked" the PI campaign to his advantage, primarily by delaying the campaign to allow the conduct of the 2007 elections. An operator working for Puno says Puno's "agenda" is to have the shift to a parliamentary government late enough to frustrate De Venecia's target of an interim parliament by July, but not too late for a May 2007 exercise. By then the plebiscite for charter change could piggyback on

the local elections, or it could be the first parliamentary elections.

By that time, too, there's no telling if De Venecia is still a member of the legislature or, if he is, he may not have the majority of the lawmakers on his side anymore.

There are talks that Benjamin Lim, the mayor of Dagupan City in the fourth district of Pangasinan, is thinking of challenging De Venecia in the congressional race next year. Lim reportedly has the backing of another influential Pangasinense, former President Fidel Ramos, who in recent months had disagreed with De Venecia over President Arroyo's fate in a parliamentary government.

Before the Ramos-De Venecia rift, however, Lim and the Speaker had a falling out (*see related story*). An election in 2007, therefore, may not be a walk in the park for the Speaker.

In the event that De Venecia retains his seat in 2007, Congress is predicted to be dominated by oppositionists by then, owing to the current unpopularity of President Arroyo whom De Venecia has strongly supported. De Venecia might not win as Speaker, or prime minister, by then. But so will Puno, who's more closely associated with Ms. Arroyo.

Meanwhile, the President's charter-change allies might just have to contain the damage that the infighting is threatening to create. ■

THE CHALLENGER

By **ARIANNE CHAN**
in Dagupan City

HE MAY just be an ant compared to the political giant, Speaker Jose de Venecia Jr., but this little ant is already crawling his way into the Speaker's turf.

Dagupan City Mayor Benjamin Lim, owner of a chain of big shopping malls in Pangasinan, is said to be training his guns on the congressional seat that De Venecia is occupying. This assumes, of course, that local elections will push through next year.

Lim admits to **NEWSBREAK** that he's been quietly doing the rounds in the towns of San Jacinto, San Fabian, Manaoag, and Mangaldan—all considered De Venecia bailiwicks—"to feel the pulse of the people." Lim's recent forays into De Venecia country have made the latter more visible in his district despite his

punishing schedule in Manila.

Speculations point to former President Ramos as the principal backer of Lim. But the city mayor clarified that "there was no agreement nor instructions nor understanding between myself and FVR with regards to my political plans".

Lim has always been known as a "Ramos boy." He was Ramos's campaign manager for Pangasinan when the former general ran for president in 1992. When Ramos won, he appointed Lim general manager of Duty Free Philippines. In 1998, Ramos handpicked Lim as the administration party's official candidate for the fourth congressional district of Pangasinan. The seat was previously occupied by De Venecia, who ran for presi-



dent that year.

Lim was congressman from 1998 to 2001. He was supposed to seek re-election in 2001 but had to give way to De Venecia, who then wanted to return to the House after his defeat

to Joseph Estrada. With a heavy heart, Lim had to settle for the mayoralty seat in Dagupan City.

De Venecia had repeatedly said he was grateful to Lim for this. In the beginning, things went smoothly between them until their relationship turned sour due to various reasons. Lim is the only mayor in Pangasinan who has been vocal against President Arroyo. He and De Venecia have also quarrelled over certain projects.

The last time that Lim spoke with the Speaker was October last year. The mayor admits he's been avoiding the Speaker "because

there is no point talking about things he promised to do but remain unfulfilled until today".

Lim says that while he enjoys being mayor of Dagupan, he still regrets not running for Congress "especially when I see that Jov allows himself to suppress the truth," referring to the "Hello, Garci" scandal involving President Arroyo.

But why fight a political giant and deprive Pangasinan of the pride of producing the next prime minister? Lim laughed and said, "I think that is also underestimating me. I don't think that is fair".

He said, "We need a leader who would not curtail the truth, we need a leader who would think of the interest of the nation as a primary interest. And quite honestly, I don't see that in Jov."

Sounds like premature campaigning to you? The "ant" wants it known that he's not going into this blind. "I do it scientifically. I don't do it by way of emotion. I consider this as a preparation for a big battle." ■

TOO LITTLE, TOO LATE

That's how this government is coping with high oil prices

By ROEL LANDINGIN

AS CRUDE prices surge to record highs, President Arroyo must be awfully thankful for Chemrez, the Filipino-owned oleochemical maker that just completed a new 60 million-liters-per-year biodiesel plant that is said to be Asia's biggest.

The P650-million facility, which raises Chemrez' biodiesel production capacity fivefold from 15 to 75 million liters a year, was inaugurated on May 3, giving Arroyo another opportunity to tout the government's efforts to ease the impact of high petroleum prices by introducing cheaper and cleaner alternatives.

Chemrez has come to be the Arroyo administration's favorite "Exhibit A" not just for the alternative energy program but for the government's response to the unrelenting rise in oil prices.

The commissioning of Chemrez' biodiesel plant was first on the list of the government's "mitigating measures to cushion oil price hikes," outlined in the April 18 press release sent out by the Department of Energy after world crude prices hit new highs. Mrs. Arroyo paid the facility a surprise visit in August last year when oil prices rose sharply.

Bold and dramatic gestures to address the oil price hike, notably Albay Rep. Joey Salceda's proposal to suspend the 12-percent value-added tax (VAT) on petroleum products, were rejected by the President's economic managers, who feared it would jeopardize the administration's fiscal targets and spook local and international investors. A suspension could have lowered unleaded gasoline price by around P4 per liter but would also have cost the government about P29 billion a year in foregone revenue. That's equivalent to about a fourth of the government's P125-billion budget deficit target this year.

Instead, the Cabinet agreed to a gradual cut in the 3-percent duty on oil imports should crude oil prices go up further. The budgetary impact of eliminating tariffs on gas pump prices is minimal—roughly P9 billion a year—but so is its effect on pump prices: just 50 centavos per liter.

GOOD POTENTIAL

Unable to cut taxes on petroleum, much less subsidize gas prices, the government is promoting private investments in alterna-

tive fuels such as coco methyl ester (CME) from coconut oil, ethanol from sugar, and compressed natural gas (CNG) to provide relief from rising prices of automotive fuels based on crude oil.

The impact is not quite as dramatic as removing the 12-percent VAT, but the alternative fuels' potential for lowering costs is still significant. Adding just 1-percent CME to diesel cuts fuel costs per kilometer by 7 percent. CNG, on the other hand, costs about half the prevailing diesel prices.

Not surprisingly, several small oil companies such as Flying V and Seaoil have



begun selling gasoline or diesel preblended with biofuels at their gas stations. Pilipinas Shell Petroleum Corp. recently announced it would also begin selling gasoline containing a 5-percent mixture of ethanol. Arroyo in 2004 issued an order requiring the government's 30,000 diesel-powered vehicles to add 1-percent CME to their fuel.

USE YOUR FEET

BIKEWAYS AND walkways are viable alternatives to motorized transport but are not getting the attention and support of top government leaders.

After launching the first 3.6 kilometers of its network of bicycle lanes amid soaring gasoline prices in October 2005, the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority (MMDA) seems to have forgotten all about the project.

The MMDA said it intends to build up to 200 kilometers of bikeways and walkways in Metro Manila until 2010 but has not added to the 3.6 kilometers it has set aside between Katipunan Avenue and Kamias Road in Quezon City for bicycles last year. The project is not getting enough funding either from the national government or from local leaders.

Yet, there is no disputing the project's potential of giving people cheap and healthy alternatives to motor vehicles that pollute the air and congest the roads. Bayani Fernando, the MMDA chair, said the average trip of Manila residents covers 2 kms., which takes only a few minutes to bike and little bit longer to walk.

Fernando was mayor of Marikina City from 1992 to 2001 and began building bike lanes in the late 1990s mainly to curb traffic congestion on the city's narrow streets.

Since 1999, the city has created over 30 kms. of bike lanes, spending at least P60 million for the project. It plans to double the length of the bike paths to over 60 km. in the next five years.

Soaring petrol prices and higher transport fares helped boost bike use in the city. After growing by only 16 per cent between 1999 and 2002, the total number of bicycles on the city's major road crossings jumped by 52 per cent to 33,389 this year from three years ago, according to a manual count in July 2005. There were only 12.5 motor vehicles for every one bicycle in last year's count, almost half the ratio in 1999. Marides Fernando, the new city mayor who is also Fernando's wife, says there are now 10,000 regular bikers in the city, suggesting that one in ten households has bikes.

The city lent around P5,000 to its employees to help them buy bicycles. On weekends, city officials go to schools to teach students the basics of safe biking and how to take



Too bad, then, that government initiatives to push for wider use of alternative fuels have met with lesser success.

Congress failed to pass the proposed biofuels legislation requiring oil companies to sell automotive fuels pre-blended with either CME or ethanol by end-2005, the original target. The bills are pending at various stages in both the House of Representatives

and the Senate. Arroyo certified the bills as urgent in her State-of-the-Nation-Address in July 2005, almost 10 months ago, with little effect.

The House has approved the proposed biodiesel law, but the bill on ethanol has yet to come out of committee deliberations. Last month, the Senate committee on energy completed the draft of a comprehensive bill covering both CME and ethanol, but this still has to go through plenary debates.

DISTRACTED LAWMAKERS

Energy officials are hoping lawmakers will finally approve the biofuels bills when Congress resumes session on May 15, but there may not be enough time before the current legislative session ends on June 9.

And while there is bipartisan support for the biofuels bill, the lawmakers' attention could be easily diverted elsewhere. The Senate is planning to resume many of its stalled investigations into alleged government anomalies after the Supreme Court voided parts of Executive Order 464. The House may get busy trying to form itself into a constituent assembly that will debate charter change.

Other measures to promote alternative energy either face hindrances or may take years to bear fruit.

A plan to deploy about 200 provincial buses running on CNG from domestically produced natural gas has been delayed because of technical problems in building the

storage and delivery facilities. These may take until the end of the year to solve. Over 20 of the buses are already in the country but are largely idle, except for a one-time pilot run in July 2005 when Mrs. Arroyo rode on a CNG bus from Malacañang to Rizal Park, and back.

The government has announced that the Philippine National Oil Co. and National Development Co. will invest P1 billion to produce biofuel from jatropha, a highly toxic plant locally known as *tuba-tuba*, but the program is still far from taking off.

India has shown initial success in running a dozen cars and trucks on diesel mixed with oil extracted from jatropha seeds, but the agronomic requirements to do so on a commercial scale have yet to be firmly established. The Department of Agriculture still needs to study if local varieties are good enough for biofuel production, and is sending a team to India to gather more information, energy officials said.

The Arroyo administration has had more success in carrying out government-wide measures to conserve energy. Last year, she ordered all national government agencies and firms to cut electricity and fuel use by a tenth of their average monthly consumption in the first half of 2005. Energy officials and staff are doing a brave job of enforcing the order, often incurring the ire of their fellow public sector workers, but the program has helped boost government savings.

DEPARTMENT'S FAILURE

It thus comes as a disappointment that the energy department failed to push harder for a proposed law giving the government enough powers to require private companies to conserve energy. The department was supposed to submit a draft of the bill to Congress in August last year but has not done so until now.

Lacking such powers, the energy department is reduced to enjoining big electricity users such as shopping malls to cut operating hours, set air-conditioning thermostats at 25° C, voluntarily implement energy audits, and other such measures to cut power use.

Expectedly, the exhortations have had little or no effect. Despite higher electricity rates, Manila Electric Co. reported that its kilowatt-hour sales to commercial users rose by 3.6 per cent in 2005 from the year before. Retailers posted the biggest increase in electricity consumption, using 16.8 per cent more power than the previous year. In contrast, sales to residential customers fell by 2.2 percent while sales to industrial users went up by only 0.6 percent. ■



care of their bikes.

Last year, the city government lent over 200 bikes to students to encourage them to bike to and from school. Officials are studying a scheme to let the students and their parents buy the bikes over a 10-month instalment period.

In Makati, home of the country's financial district, commercial tenants of property developer Ayala Corp. built several kilometers of covered elevated and ground-level walkways, and underground street crossings. Began in the mid-1990s and costing P700 million so

far, the project has helped boost pedestrian traffic to restaurants and shops in and around the office buildings.

An Ayala consultant, Salvador Tan, said the walkways, which are linked to a nearby commuter train station, are used by over 200,000 people every weekday. Makati office workers now use their feet more often, increasing their average walking distance to 700 meters from 450 meters in previous years.

Noontime motor vehicle traffic fell by about five per cent this year compared to eight years ago as busy executives walked to lunch instead of driving. The number of cars on the road during lunchtime fell by 15,000 to 20,000 between 1997 and 2005, said Tan.

"Pedestrians will walk more and longer with a better environment, and a good pedestrian environment is good for business," said Tan, summing up the factors for the project's initial success.

In both cases, planners made sure the bike lanes and walkways linked people to where they wanted to go such as restaurants and shops in Makati, and government offices, markets, parks and schools in Marikina.

—Roel Lindingin



RAKING IT IN:
GMA-7's Arnold
Clavio and Mike
Enriquez



WHEN NEWSCAST

THE COUNTRY'S TOP BROADCASTERS ADVERTISE SOAP, SARDINES, AND DET

By CHAY F. HOFILÉÑA

HIS VOICE on the radio is the ultimate wake-up alert, the perfect companion to a cup of brewed coffee in the early morning and a mind that needs perking up.

At night, he reads the news with a thumping and pulsating rhythm that makes even the blandest story sound like the biggest exclusive ever.

Mike Enriquez, the 54-year-old bombastic newscaster of TV giant GMA-7 famous for his machine-gun rattling threat—*hindi namin kayo tatantanan*—takes getting used to.

But it's all part of the job, he says. From the mild-sounding DJ "Baby Michael" on DWBL in the 1970s, Enriquez has successfully repackaged himself into a much bolder "Mr. Imbestigador."

Off camera and outside the radio booth, the tough broadcaster sheds his public persona and casually admits—saying it would be false modesty to deny it—that he is a celebrity.

The celebrity status has had its costs. A 4:30 am wake-up call rouses a self-confessed diabetic from Monday to Friday to anchor his 6 to 9 a.m. radio show on DZBB, which is owned by GMA-7. The three-hour stretch is a far cry from the 8 to 9 am slot that the station initially asked him to take on, as his appeal to both advertisers and listeners spread quickly far and wide.

Said to be among the most credible anchors on radio today, Enriquez has allowed the network to capitalize on his popularity. Today, easily from 15 to 17 minutes of an

hour on his radio program are lapped up by advertisements that are either canned or personal endorsements of Enriquez himself.

From phones to sardines, he's advertised them. On average, he personally endorses two to three products per half hour—multivitamin Enervon, Smart 3G, Kremil S, Tuseran, Med Express, 555 Sardines, Rite Med, and lately, Condura airconditioners, Minola cooking oil, phone company PLDT, Coat Saver Paint, among others. Last year, the only ad he did for television was ABS Bitter Herbs.

Unlike his counterpart, DZRH's Joe Taruc, a long-timer in the airwaves, Enriquez more than just reads advertising copy. He gives it a personal touch, interspersing the avowed benefits of a product with the endearment, "Kapuso," which also happens to be part of GMA-7's tagline.

Thus, while Taruc's listeners know that he is merely reading advertising material about a product, Enriquez's listeners are made to feel that he has tried the product himself and is convinced that it works.



ERS SELL

ERGENTS. SHOULD THEY?

“Advertisers want real people whom the market can identify with,” Enriquez says. “You can’t be an effective endorser if there is no empathy with your audience.”

CLAVIO THE ENTERTAINER

Like Enriquez, colleague Arnold Clavio, the original of a GMA-7 morning show puppet, Arn-Arn, has no qualms calling himself a celebrity, too. Last year, a huge billboard that had his face plastered on it stood tall along C-5, a major highway that connects Metro Manila to the south, reminding coffee drinkers about the Great Taste brand. Universal Robina Corp. has renewed his contract as endorser of the coffee brand.

Clavio can only be thrilled. “*Gusto ko makilala talaga, gusto kong i-introduce ang foundation ko. Kung mas kilala ka, mas successful ang program sa foundation ko,*” he says, referring to his Igan ng Pilipinas Foundation Inc. (I really want to be more well known because I want to introduce my foundation. If I’m more well known, my

foundation’s programs will be more successful.)

News anchor of GMA-7’s early evening newscast “Saksi” and the two-hour radio show “Dobol A sa Dobol B,” Clavio also hosts the morning show “Unang Hirit” and the late night public affairs show “Emergency.”

A University of Santo Tomas journalism graduate who worked at a fast-food chain for two years to get through college, the 40-year-old Clavio has certainly carved a niche for himself in broadcast journalism.

Jolly and good-natured, the rotund Clavio, otherwise known as “Igan,” (short for *kaibigan* or friend) can belt out a song or easily clown around. Rather unusual for a newscaster, he admits, and explains he’s able to swing it because he was able to hone these skills at a theater group in college.

He was already making people laugh even before he became a newscaster. Clavio is completely comfortable with what he terms his “infotainment style” because, according to him, the person that he is off-cam is the

same person that viewers see on-cam.

He does not fit into the usual mold of a serious, detached newscaster, and in fact, has his satirical “jeng-jeng” jingles that he and his partners on radio sing live every morning. Reminiscent of the pre-martial law political satires on the Lopez-owned Channel 2, the jingles attack personalities in the news without being too personal.

“*Parang biniro mo siya, di mo binabatukan o sinusuntok. Pinoy eh, lahat gustong tumawa,*” Clavio says. (It’s like spoofing someone. You don’t assault him or her directly. It’s very Filipino, everybody wants a laugh.)

A different kind of radio program, “Dobol A,” which Clavio anchors with Ali Sotto, has been on the air since 1998, has won a number of awards, and enjoys a wider reach now.

This has boosted the popularity of both Clavio and Enriquez, making it tempting for advertisers gung-ho about selling their products to a mass market to use them as celebrity endorsers.

FEMALE CELEBRITIES WHO STAND OUT AS FAVORITES

CELEBRITY	COUNT OF BRANDS	CATEGORIES
 SHARON CUNETA PANGILINAN	7	Toothpaste, San Pro, Fem Wash, Laundry Corned Meat, Facial Care, Diaper
 RUBY RODRIGUEZ	6	Noodles, Laundry, Fab Con, Powdered Juice, Diapers
 CHARLENE GONZALEZ MUHLACH	4	Fab Con, Fem Wash, Diapers, Bleach
 HEART EVANGELISTA	4	Toothpaste, San Pro, Noodles, San Pro
 KRIS AQUINO	3	Soap, Fem Wash, Corned Beef
 MARICEL SORIANO	3	Condensed Milk Noodles, Corned Beef
 DONITA ROSE	3	Shampoo, San Pro, Softdrinks

Source: Nielsen Media Research Based on ads launched in 2003 (considering only top 20 categories) Presented in January 2004

And both have willingly obliged.

But aren't Clavio and Enriquez journalists who cover and deliver the news? Has it become acceptable for journalists—whose standing in the profession depends on credibility—to bank on that same credibility to sell products?

PALMA: NEVER AGAIN

ABS-CBN's Tina Monzon Palma, herself an icon in the local broadcast industry, once before endorsed an orange juice drink, but never did it again after watching herself and then feeling squeamish about it.

"I thought it was affecting my job as a news reader at that time because there was no clear delineation between news and endorsing a product which I had never tried before," Palma explains.

"I wanted to protect the process of newsgathering all the way to the final stage of reading the story. I wanted to protect the process because people who gather the story are engaged in the business of verifying it. And it was about credibility."

Wouldn't it have been odd, for instance, for legendary American broadcaster Edward Murrow to sell his favorite cigarette brand while fighting for free speech at the height of the anti-communist hysteria whipped up by US Senator John McCarthy?

If American broadcast icon Peter Jennings never endorsed the shampoo that he used throughout the years that he was alive and anchoring for ABC News, or if Dan Rather or Tom Brokaw, who belong to that just-passed generation of evening newscasters, never sold their toothpaste or detergent brands, could they have had compelling reasons?

Media critic Vergel Santos says that being a newsperson and a product endorser at the same time "has the effect of a newsperson selling his credibility as a neutral observer, the very quality on which his profession turns. For, once he endorses a product, he is presumed to have taken sides—in favor of the product he endorses and its makers and against all competitor products and their makers."

BLURRING THE LINES

Santos also says that the situation is made worse by the fee collected for the endorsement, the "lack of professional expertise to make a judgment of what is a better product," and the signal sent out to all advertisers that the newsperson could be bought.

Certainly, a celebrity endorser, depending on stature and popularity, can fetch millions of pesos in talent fees. There are no stand-out favorite male celebrities, but Clavio would not mind being in their league if this would mean greater exposure for him and his Igan ng Pilipinas Foundation Inc.

It's a choice between

After all, Clavio says, the foundation, which has sought sponsorships and partnerships with advertisers and clients whom he has worked with, has built fun centers for hospitals that serve terminally ill children.

In exchange, he has helped sell their products. Call it quid pro quo. Clavio's personal endorsement of Great Taste coffee has reportedly resulted in a "30 percent increase in sales" of the brand.

"The TV audience can forgive us for doing detergents even as we report about the Garci tapes," Palma points out, because audience perception of newscasters has blurred. Viewers think that they are part of entertainment because of how the networks have packaged them.

This has resulted in mutated news programs, except perhaps for her own, "The World Tonight," which has stuck to the traditional format of straight news.

News as entertainment crept—at first surreptitiously, and then more aggressively—into newrooms. The line-up of news for TV no longer follows the traditional top story down to the less significant stories. Instead, newscasts open with the more visually exciting stories. "*Iba na ang latag ng storya*," as Palma puts it. (The line-up of stories is now different.)

TENSION IN THE NEWSROOM

While journalism is about storytelling, Clavio quips that it is also supposed not just

to inform but to entertain.

Before long, even news personalities felt that they, too, had become celebrities and just like entertainers, were entitled to their own advertisements.

Last year, ABS-CBN's own newscasters, Korina Sanchez and Karen Davila, had their own billboards along EDSA. If Sanchez had her Bench, Davila had her Obagi. Before them, there were Loren Legarda, Noli de Castro, and Mel Tiangco when they were still with the ABS-CBN stable.

Tiangco got into a legal skirmish with ABS-CBN because of a third commercial she did for a detergent. She went against the company's 1995 policy of limiting its talents to only two commercials a year, and was accused by the network of going against a guideline that prohibited on-cam news and public affairs personalities from endorsing products.

Ricardo "Dong" Puno Jr., then head of the news department, issued a memo to Tiangco sometime in 1996, asking her not to push through with her third ad and to abide by the company policy.

The product endorsements were a "pet peeve" of no less than the late grand old man, Eugenio Lopez Jr., says Puno. Even the late Francisco "Kiko" Evangelista, Ted Failon, and Jay Sonza, all talents of the network, were endorsing products then and

THE LURE OF ADVERTISING

CELEBRITIES CAN whip up magic.

In combination with factors like price, distribution, and ad expenditures, they can pull up the sales of certain products. This is why, according to ACNielsen, an advertiser's choice of endorser is "very critical."

Television, which has practically saturated Metro Manila, is the preferred medium of advertisers. Last year, according to Nielsen Media Research, it accounted for three-fourths of total "adspend," followed by radio with 16 percent, and print, with only 9 percent.

Of late, some broadcast journalists have been handpicked by advertising agencies to sell detergents, coffee, and low-cost medicine, to name a few.

"We match character, personality type, appeal to our target market, and how they relate with [the endorser]," says Tom Banguis, president of AB Communication advertising agency. Explaining the choice of GMA newscaster Arnold Clavio for the "*buong-buo ang sarap*" Great Taste ad, Banguis says that Clavio "seemed

to fit well, particularly the type of work he is in, which requires long hours, mental alertness, involvement in emergency situations, and the need to be quick on his feet."

In exchange, the agency places advertisements to support Claudio's programs on both radio and TV. To the advertiser's advantage, competitor ABS-CBN agrees to air spots featuring Clavio; the network is not as accommodating to other GMA talents like Mike Enriquez and Mel Tiangco.

The competition has made life more complicated for advertisers because, as Banguis puts it, "we need both networks to gain maximum reach to our target markets."

Emily Abrera, chairman emeritus of McCann Erickson Philippines, explains the preference for testimonials and endorsements as a reaction to the clutter in advertising. There is a proliferation of billboards and products, and if people are to remember anything, they need memory cues, which celebrities and personalities can provide.

ethics and profit —VERGEL SANTOS

this did not sit well with the elder Lopez.

Tiangco contested the directive, arguing that negotiations for the ad began way before the memo was issued. She was warned that she would be suspended from news and the “Mel and Jay” show, according to Puno, but she did not wait for the suspension to take effect and instead resigned then crossed over to GMA-7.

She filed a case against ABS-CBN, claiming she was forced to resign, and that the prohibition imposed on her was a violation of her contract. She won her case in 1996 and ABS-CBN lost an appeal in 2003.

Puno is quick to point out that her legal victory was on account of her contract rather than the company policy. He adds that because of the stiff competition, the other network allows product endorsements because they enhance ratings.

It has not helped, says Puno, that no media regulatory body has declared that news personalities cannot endorse products. “The principle should be upheld because endorsements can compromise editorial independence, given how the media has evolved.”

COMPROMISED INDEPENDENCE?

Both Enriquez and Clavio are categorical in saying that their endorsements do not translate into compromises. “They bank on our credibility but our credibility is not for

sale...They talk to our marketing person when it comes to negotiating a contract—I’m out of that room, that’s SOP (standard operating procedure,” Enriquez says.

“Credibility is what this business is all about and anything that will threaten or endanger it will immediately be addressed firmly, decisively, swiftly,” he adds. If an advertiser or a client would go as far as insisting that they go soft on a controversial story involving their company or product, “the contract ends there and then.”

“Oras magkaproblema, di ako pwedeng itali na propagandista ako o taga-depensa ng produkto. Venue lang ako para maging balanced ang information dissemination...Endorser lang ako. Kaya maingat kami, meron kaming unwritten agreement na respect niyo ang profession ko. Kinuha niyo lang ako as personality at ang credibility ko ang naidagdag sa ganda ng produkto niyo,” Clavio explains. (Once a problem arises, I cannot be expected to be a propagandist or defender of the product. I can only be a venue for the dissemination of balanced information...I’m a mere endorser. This is why we are careful. We have an unwritten agreement that they would respect my profession. They took me only as a personality whose credibility enhances their product.)

Santos counters that being news subjects themselves, these companies or products actually or potentially “should be regarded

with detachment by the news media, if they were to preserve their credibility. Otherwise, such as in the case of a news person endorsing a product, he and possibly his own organization, by infection, become co-opted.”

As a policy, GMA-7 management does not negotiate on behalf of their anchors. Advertisers deal directly with them and negotiate a price, which, in the case of Clavio, reaches a minimum of a million pesos.

GMA allows but regulates the commercial endorsements of its news anchors and public affairs personalities. For instance, commercials cannot make any reference to the GMA network or the programs the personalities are associated with.

In addition, the ad should not use visual tools that will associate the talent with his or her broadcast profession or programs or station. “This is to help keep the anchor separate from the regular persona/endorser,” the network explains.

How the audience can separate Enriquez or Clavio as private product endorsers from their status as GMA anchors is difficult to see. It’s hard to imagine how news personalities can be credible when reading a negative story about a product they endorse in a “private” capacity.

To avoid a conflict of interest situation, they may be asked to desist from reading a news story that concerns their product but this already poses limitations on their independent practice of journalism.

ADDED INCOME

On the other hand, ABS-CBN, according to its Standards and Ethics Manual, prohibits its on-air and on-cam personalities from “appearing in commercial advertisements in any media” including live appearances as endorser or host in any event.

Exceptions are considered if the talent is “not paid” and if the ad works to “promote the program, network, public service and/or the national interest.” Thus, Sanchez’s billboard carried the name of her morning show with Kris, while Davila’s had a big “Insider” logo.

GMA-7 admits there is a practical reason behind its own policy. Doing product endorsements “is a legitimate income opportunity for these talents,” and has some value in “boosting their popularity, getting the public to know them and appreciate them better.”

While big boss Felipe Gozon sees nothing wrong with the policy, internally, there appears to be no unanimous view on the issue, network insiders say.

But if newscasters-cum-product endorsers are to be believed, credible journalists in print might as well do the same and fervently hope that nothing ever goes wrong. ■

For radio, Enriquez is preferred for announcer-on-board ads, says Medialink division vice president Alex Fernandez of United Laboratories (among the biggest advertisers), because of his endorsement style, which almost seamlessly introduces the product being sold.

Endorsements by anchors on radio are actually nothing new, Fernandez says, citing personalities like Rafael Yabut and Rod Navarro, as well as Johnny de Leon, who did “Bataa Matamis” cigarette ads decades ago.

Fernandez sees nothing wrong with advertisers using journalists for their ads. Consumers are intelligent enough to distinguish between an anchor’s endorsement “as a person” and as a “newscaster,” he argues.

The arrangement has also benefited radio tremendously. Partly due to the network’s ratings and partly because of product endorsements, revenues for radio “increased significantly last year compared to the previous year,” says RJ Antonio Seva, sales manager of GMA Marketing.

The success of endorsements has been such that the waiting time for them to air on DZBB has reached three months, given the maximum six-endorsements-per-hour ceiling. They run for about 20 seconds but often go longer because of Enriquez’s unscripted endorsements.

Seva estimates that the station earns around P11.4 million a month based on the floor rate of P15,000 per airing of an endorsement. These endorsements, he says, account for “more than a 50-percent share of the business.”

With more than 200 radio stations nationwide competing for the advertising pie, the marketing strategy is a revenue stream difficult to shut down.

In the end, as media critic Vergel Santos puts it, it is a choice between “old-fashioned ethics” and “rationalized profit.” After all, the line between news and advertising “has been drawn so clearly and by such long and solid tradition.”

As advertisers say, the issue is more properly a journalistic, rather than an advertising, concern. —**Chay F. Hofileña**

SEX FOR MOONLIGHTERS

With more Filipinos going overseas to travel and work, more women are also getting involved in the flesh trade

By **TRIXIA ENRIQUEZ CARUNGCONG** in Singapore

TWENTY-FIVE-year-old Tina Cruz (not her real name) first came to Singapore in October last year, quite unprepared for the job waiting for her. “My best friend’s cousin works here too so she helped me when I was back in Manila looking for another job,” she says.

Tina used to work as a saleslady at a Shoemart mall in Manila, earning about P9,000 a month. Her husband had the same job, but they found it hard to make ends meet, with their 7-year-old son and 3-year-old daughter. “It’s so hard to earn a living back home. How can you support a family with that salary? How can you provide for your children’s future?”

Without telling her husband, Tina spent about P15,000 for a ticket to Singapore on budget airline Jetstar. She also brought US\$500 as “show money” at the Singapore airport. Then, with a two-week “social visit” pass and some help from her best friend’s cousin, she learned the ins and outs of the island’s night life—where to find clients, how much to ask for, how to avoid getting caught by the police.

She decided to base herself at one of the bars in Lucky Plaza, a shopping mall in central Orchard Road. Lucky Plaza is popular with Filipinos. On Sundays, domestic workers would gather here to meet friends or send money back to the Philippines through the remittance centers.

PRACTICAL REASONS

Tina says she earned 5 Singapore dollars or about P156 for every drink that cost S\$15. Every time she went home with a client, she got paid S\$150.

“After three and a half months, I was able to bring home P200,000.... In my family I’m the breadwinner and I pay for everything. When I went home I gave my aunts P1,000 each....and I treated my family. There was one day I spent P10,000.”

In the beginning, Tina says, her husband found it difficult to accept her kind of work.

But he later agreed with her view that this was best for their family. She says they have to be practical. She is even helping her sister to join her in Singapore. “I think I have a heart of stone. But I explained the job to her. *Babuyan talaga (It’s really crass).*”

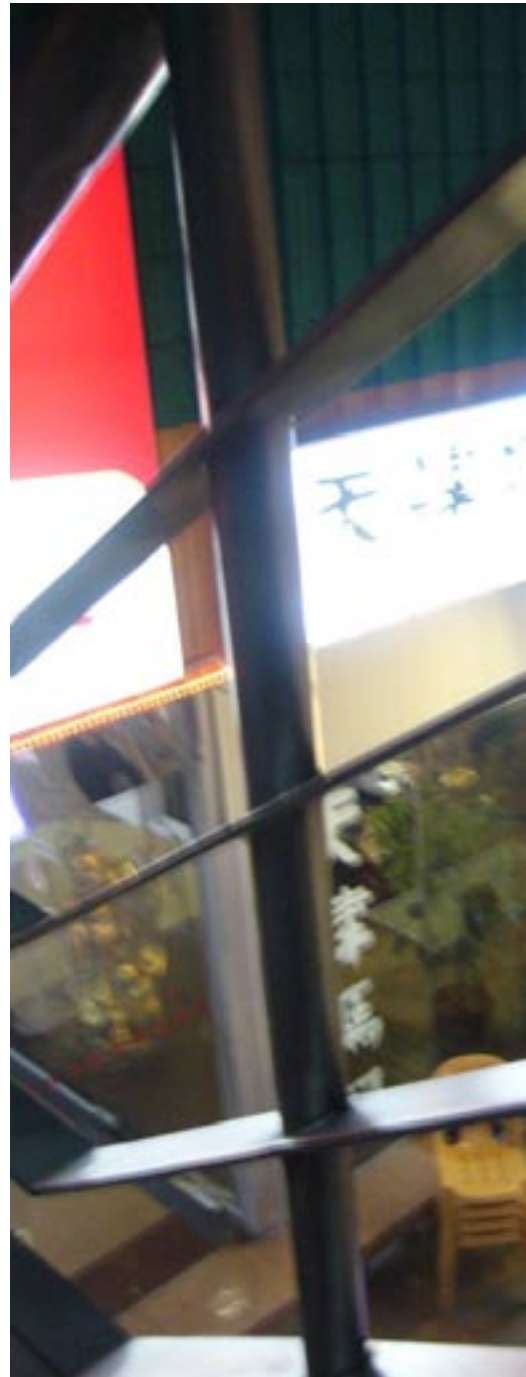
Tina’s story is echoed in those of other Filipinos working at pubs in other parts of the island.

A growing number of Filipino women enter Singapore to work in the sex trade. Many say they found out about the opportunity to earn thousands of pesos for a few hours’ work through relatives, friends, or neighbors who had also come to Singapore to work in the world’s oldest profession.

Rachel (not her real name), from Cebu, now works at a pub in Duxton Hill near Singapore’s Chinatown. She says she came here last year after obtaining a degree in agriculture, to follow in the footsteps of her sister. Another Filipino based in Paramount Shopping Centre says her sister, too, works with her at the same pub.

FAVORED DESTINATION

In the last few years, there has been a jump in the number of Filipinos going to Singapore as tourists. Statistics from the Singapore Tourism Board show strong double-digit growths in Filipino tourist arrivals.





FAVORITE HANGOUTS:
Filipinos in Singapore
spend their weekends
in these malls

In 2004, the Philippines posted the third strongest growth of 39 percent with 246,000 arrivals, following Thailand and Australia. It was the highest year-on-year growth for the Philippines. Last year, the country, with 320,000 arrivals, registered the second highest growth after Vietnam,

While these numbers are not direct proof of the rising number of Filipino sex workers here, they hint at how word-of-mouth is helping to boost tourism, with people com-

ing in with motives other than just shopping or enjoying the scenery.

There is a fairly large community of Filipinos in the island, which has a population of 4.5 million. The Philippine Embassy in Singapore estimates there are about 115,000 Overseas Filipino Workers or OFWs (as of December 2005). Some 80,000 are domestic helpers while 35,000 others are professionals.

LUCRATIVE SIDELINE

Domestic helpers have often been under scrutiny in the Singapore media for working illegally during their off days. There is a common perception that many moonlight as sex workers. An article in *The Straits Times* in September last year quoted a shopkeeper as saying that as many as two out of 10 may be doing it.

Rosemarie (not her real name) has been working as a maid in Singapore for more than 10 years. On her off days, she works as a receptionist at a pub in Orchard Towers in Orchard Road.

She agrees with estimates that as many as 20 percent of the maids engage in the sex trade. "As far as I know about 2 out of 10 maids work as prostitutes. They want more money to send home. Now they are practical. You cannot blame anybody. If they want, they can earn money, some from sex. I just leave them alone. I know a lot who do this, but it is none of my business."

She says the women meet potential clients in discos or karaoke bars, or somebody introduces them. The reason they do it, Rosemarie says, is the money, since most maids earn only about S\$300 a month. "Some have to provide for their family. To tell the truth, our salary as maids is not enough."

Bridget Lew, the president of the volunteer group Humanitarian Organization for Migration Economics (HOME), also believes that many Filipino maids moonlight as sex workers. "It's quite common. But I have not come across specific cases. I only hear about them. There are only one or two I know about."

But John Gee, vice president of Transient Workers Count Too, a non-government organization that looks after the welfare of foreign domestic workers, thinks the issue

has been blown out of proportion. "If they want to do it, why not do it full time? I'm sure there are those who do it, but I've always felt that the reports and rumors tend to exaggerate."

Indeed, if 20 percent of the 80,000 Filipino maids in Singapore offer sex for sale on their off days, that would mean about 16,000 women.

EXAGGERATED REPORTS

In his 1998 book *No Money, No Honey*, journalist David Brazil estimated that about 6,000 women of different nationalities might have been working at that time in Singapore's sex trade, including those doing it full time and those on "working holidays."

Compared with this total figure, the estimate of the number of Filipino sex workers

appears very high, considering that 40 percent of sex workers in Singapore are said to be from China, 20 percent from Indonesia, and 15 percent from Thailand.

On the same vein, Gee says: "It's up in legend, people think it is [very common], but I don't think so. Some Filipino maids just talk in a contemptuous, condescending way about other maids. Always it's someone who knows someone else."

"Sure it's happening, sure it's tempting, but when you listen to some maids, they are talking about women who behave in a loose way with

their boyfriends or other men, but they're not prostitutes.... Some refer to it in a rather careless way. We have to be careful about that, of people using different terms."

REGULATED PROSTITUTION

Previous reports in the media say prostitution is legal in Singapore. Ask Singaporeans and they'd come up with different answers. Most are unsure what the law says.

Singapore's Women's Charter has provisions on offenses relating to prostitution, like trafficking in women and children. The Miscellaneous Offences Act disallows "disorderly and indecent behavior by prostitutes" and soliciting in public places.

A report by the US Department of State describes the situation thus: "The country's laws neither ban nor authorize prostitution per se. However, public solicitation, living

FAST FACTS

- Global trafficking profit estimated at US\$ 2 to 7 billion a year
- In 2004, 53 percent of victims were trafficked to the Asia-Pacific, 25 percent to the Middle East, and 19 percent to Europe.
- 51 percent of the victims were trafficked with their consent or knowledge
- 49 percent were deceived
- Anti-Trafficking Act of 2003 (Republic Act 9208) penalizes the recruitment, transfer or harboring or receipt of a victim with or without her consent.

Source: *Trafficking Primer*, TUCP/Solidarity Center/USAID Anti-Trafficking Project

on the earnings of a prostitute, and maintaining a brothel are illegal. The authorities periodically carried out crackdowns on solicitation for prostitution, and arrested and deported foreign prostitutes, particularly when their activities took place outside of informally designated red light areas.”

Therein lies the reason for the confusion—prostitution is officially tolerated, and there are six areas where it is regulated. These so-called Designated Red Light Areas (DRAs), include Geylang, Flanders Square, Keong Saik Road, and Desker Road. Some of the sex workers there can register for yellow ID cards at the Department of Sexually Transmitted Diseases, where they are encouraged to go for regular medical checkups.

Gerrie Lim, author of *Invisible Trade: High Class Sex for Sale in Singapore*, quotes a former policeman as saying the sex trade “is kind of an open secret.... We came to realize that it would be better to leave it the way it is, so that that kind of activity can be centralized.”

FAVORITE HAUNTS

Filipino women who are involved in the sex trade can be commonly found in several areas. At the main shopping area of Orchard Road, there’s Orchard Towers, which some describe as “Four Floors of Whores.” It has several pubs that cater to Filipinos. Orchard Towers is right next door to Palais Renaissance, which has some high-end boutiques.

Farther down the road and right across from the Orchard MRT Station is Lucky Plaza, where Filipino maids congregate on Sundays.

In Chinatown, some Filipino sex workers hang around People’s Park Centre, at the hawker center in front of McDonald’s. They are known to entertain clients who are Filipino, Malaysian, or Indonesian seamen.

Paramount Shopping Centre in the eastern part of the island is notorious for the sleazy pubs on its ground floor. About 15 pubs with different motifs and types of music cater to customers. Some of the places feature loud disco music, others have television screens showing football matches while the rest have tasteful wooden interiors and laid-back music for those who prefer a quiet drink.

What they all have in common, though, are the Filipino women who serve drinks and offer sexual services. Some wait for clients outside while others work the floors, looking for men seeking companionship. Here, too, the way the women dress and behave reflects the different kinds of pubs. One sports bar has women all wearing short skirts and dresses while another has women in casual jeans and tank tops.

At one pub, the women said they were

brought in as tourists by their employer, a Filipina married to a Singaporean. Each of them paid P30,000, which covered their airfare and agent’s fee.

They have to sell at least seven drinks each night so they can get an “allowance” of S\$40 or about P1,200. If they don’t meet the quota, they can only get S\$20.

To extend their stay in Singapore, they usually go to neighboring Malaysia or Indonesia for a few days. When they come back, they can get another social visit pass for two weeks.

The women say they have to pay for their food and accommodation, and they’re not sure if they will be able to recoup their investment. Twelve of them stay at their employer’s apartment near Paramount Shopping Centre.

Paramount is considered a hot spot, with plainclothes policemen routinely checking the pubs to catch women who are found illegally soliciting or overstaying their visas.

GRAY AREAS

Statistics from the Singapore Police Force show that in 2003, some 2,300 foreign women were arrested for illegally soliciting. In

2004, the figure jumped to 5,200, and last year 3,200 were arrested. First offenders face fines of up to S\$1,000. For subsequent offenses, they may have to pay up to S\$2,000 and be imprisoned for up to six months.

The Philippine Embassy in Singapore acknowledges that “prostitution is a social problem that affects not just the image of our women but also their families and our country in general.”

Responding to a request for information, the embassy said reports of Filipinos who enter as tourists and engage in prostitution during their stay “have not been validated and no definite information as to their exact number is currently available.”

An official from the embassy cited the sensitive nature of the sex trade, which discourages those involved from revealing themselves. “We know it is happening, and with the budget airlines it is easier for them to come here. From the point of view of social order and public image, it is a problem. But the issue is of a sensitive nature.”

He also cited policy aspects that make it difficult to keep track of sex workers: “There’s a gray area. Filipino officials, for



example, have no mandate to subject to questioning those who are leaving [the Philippines] as tourists.”

While many women who leave the Philippines to become sex workers in Singapore know what they are getting into, there are those who are victims of trafficking.

Bridget Lew of HOME says she has encountered only a few such cases: “In my experience only two in 2003 and another two in 2004. They came to the shelter for assistance. They ran away from the pubs, where they had to sell beer to get their salary. [Some women in such a situation] may end up having to offer sex services. The four of them stayed with me, we helped to repatriate them. [To those like them who need assistance] we provide shelter and a safe place to stay till cases are resolved by the Ministry of Manpower.”

Many other cases, however, go unreported. ■

These two articles were first written for an investigative reporting class at the Asian Center for Journalism at the Ateneo de Manila University. The authors are finishing their masters in journalism at the Center.



GOING AFTER TRAFFICKERS

THERE ARE very few documented cases of trafficking of Filipinas to Singapore. But the scant numbers are deceptive.

Romulo Asis, chief of the Anti-Human Trafficking Division (AHTRAD) of the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI), clarifies that the numbers exclude verbal accounts of women who do not file a complaint against the trafficker.

The Department of Foreign Affairs received eight cases of trafficking to Singapore for this year. “But the women refused to execute a sworn statement. We cannot force them to do so,” says Edna Lazaro, special assistant to the undersecretary on migrant affairs.

Securing a victim’s complaint and gathering enough evidence for prosecution has not been easy.

Of the 30 cases of human trafficking received by the NBI in 2004, only seven were recommended for prosecution. Three were dismissed while the other three were recommended for further investigation. In 2005, 74 cases were received, 15 of which were recommended for dismissal. Only six were for prosecution and nine for further investigation.

One of these cases cited Singapore as the destination country, according to records from the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA). The victim was recruited as a waitress by a certain “Loida” (also known as “Dang”) but ended up working for “Zeny,” a Filipina, at Sunset Pub in Singapore. The POEA helped her in filing a complaint with the Department of Justice (DOJ). But the last names of the traffickers were unknown to the victim. Thus, the only action taken as of last January was putting “Loida’s” address under surveillance.

Most victims meet with recruiters who use aliases. Traffickers also operate without a license from the POEA, making it difficult for law enforcers to track them down much less conduct surveillance on them. These discourage

victims from pursuing a case that they know they are likely to lose.

Senior state counsel Robert Larga, however, confirms the release of a DOJ circular indicating that a trafficking case may not be dismissed on the mere basis of the execution of an affidavit of desistance. This means that regardless of a financial settlement reached by both parties, prosecution can continue.

Lazaro says this does not make the wheels of justice move any faster. “It’s still tough because the Philippine government would have to put up a package to make prosecution really attractive to the victims...It’s quite slow. They (the victims) lose interest...they just want to go home,” she says. And they don’t want their cases known to their families because “they’d get ostracized.”

The Witness Protection Program of the government is not sufficient as well. Victims can avail of a regular allowance of only P200. “It only shoulders transportation during the actual court hearings. That’s [just] six months,” says Gillian Dupa of the Trade Union Congress of the Philippines.

Another trafficking victim in Japan, says Asis, refused a P50,000-settlement offer by the accused. But due to the insufficiency of the program’s standard stipend, she returned to her province.

This is a familiar dead end. Poverty forces victims to take odd jobs abroad. Mired in the same situation upon repatriation, they have limited means to go to court.

“There are jurisdictions where prostitution is work. How can you say you’re trafficked when it’s legal there?” says Lazaro. But from a sending country’s point of view, anything that exploits a person even if she’s a willing victim is still considered exploitation. Says Lazaro: “You can’t speak of meaningful choice when there are no choices to speak of.” —**Carol H. Pajaron**



THE ARTIST IS ALSO AN ACTIVIST: Bienvenido Lumbera at an anti-government rally.

POLITICS AND ARTS

Concerned artists will push for a new law that would deny the President any prerogative in the selection of National Artists

By MIRIAM GRACE A. GO

“DNA.” Artists and writers coined it in 2003, when President Arroyo issued a last-minute order to name a family friend National Artist. The derisive phrase—“Dagdag National Artist”—recently made the rounds of text messages again following reports that the President might confer the awards to two artists who were eliminated as early as the first round of the selection process.

For the fourth consecutive time over almost a decade, the award that the government says “embodies the nation’s highest ideals in humanism and aesthetic expression” is mired in controversy. As we went to press, Malacañang indicated that President Arroyo

would be conferring the award on the late Sen. Francisco “Soc” Rodrigo (for writing poetry and translating plays) and sculptor and painter Abdulmari Asia Imao as a form of political accommodation (*see related stories*).

The Palace is not denying that the two

didn’t pass the thorough three-phase selection process. It argues that the law gives the President the prerogative to add to the list submitted to her by the committee composed of representatives from various artistic fields and institutions. The award is jointly administered by the National Commission for Culture and the Arts (NCCA) and the Cultural Center of the Philippines (CCP).

Questions on the credibility of the awards persist, and this time concerned artists are seriously thinking ways to prevent any more interventions that could further diminish the prestige and relevance of the awards. They want a new law that would specifically deny the President any “prerogative” in relation to the National Artist Awards, except to confer it

to the ones chosen by the designated experts.

Safeguarding the process may also mean keeping the National Artist Awards at par with similar recognitions that the states of Thailand, Japan, France, the US, and others confer on their artists.

SHORT LIST

NEWSBREAK talked to several sources involved in the various stages of the deliberations. Having sworn to keep the confidentiality of the proceedings, these sources requested not to be identified. They confirmed the information we earlier gathered that:

■ Rodrigo was among the 19 nominated for the literature category, and Imao was one of the 25 nominated for the visual arts category.

■ In the first round—conducted by the Council of Experts in each field—Rodrigo and Imao didn't make it to the short list of their respective categories. Shorlisted for Literature were Bienvenido Lumbera and Cirilo Bautista; shorlisted for Visual Arts were Ben Cabrera (more popularly known as BenCab) and Mauro Malang Santos.

After the first deliberation, however, Alejandro Roces wrote in his *Philippine Star* column that Rodrigo deserved to be named National Artist for Literature. This was followed by news reports quoting NCCA's Cecille Guidote Alvarez as saying that the President had the prerogative to confer him the award.

Roces himself became a National Artist for Literature in 2003 through the back-

door. Eliminated on the first round, he got the executive order for his award much later than the awardees who really made it on the list. (See "And Then There Were Five," www.newsbreak.com.ph).

FAMILY TIES

Roces was education secretary of the late President Diosdado Macapagal, the incumbent's father. When Roces served under President Arroyo, he was fired as chair of the Movie and Television Review and Classification Board, but was later given the National Artist Award.

On the other hand, Rodrigo was Diosdado's contemporary as an anti-Marcos politician. Rodrigo's daughter Veronica ("Bing") was the high school best friend of the President. Bing later became President Arroyo's correspondence secretary in Malacañang, but had to resign after she blew the whistle on First Gentleman Mike Arroyo's alleged acceptance of a P50-million bribe from a telecoms company.

In the case of Imao, the President endorsed him as early as last year. As soon as the nominations were in, President Arroyo issued a statement on March 17, 2005: "Today, I am happy to announce that, on the occasion of World Theater this month, I am conferring the Presidential Merit Award to Dr. Abdulmari Asia Imao, which award will strengthen his nomination for the National Artist Award in 2006."

Lately, Malacañang claimed that it was be-

ing flooded by petitions and endorsements from several individuals and organizations, especially from Mindanao, for conferring on Imao the National Artist award for visual arts.

"I know I deserve the award," Imao said in an e-mail interview. No artist in the South known for promoting indigenous art has won the award, and this is "unfair," he added.

The lobbying for Rodrigo and Imao was the reason that after the release of the names of the six National Artists in late March, Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita took them back and said there could be additional awardees. It's not true that the Palace was re-considering Fernando Poe Jr., who was on the original list.

The second round of deliberation, where representatives from eight artistic fields voted across sectors, came up with eight finalists: Cabrera, Lumbera, Ramon Obusan (dance), Poe (film), Ildefonso Santos Jr. (architecture and allied arts), Ramon Valera (fashion design), Naty Crame Rogers (theater), and George Canseco (music).

From the eight, the joint committees of the CCP and the NCCA and the 12 living national artists, chose the first six names for the final list. Logic would dictate that if the President wanted to add two more awardees, she could choose Rogers and Canseco. However, as we went to press, people involved in the preparation for the awarding ceremonies said they already had the materials for the six, but were waiting for Rodrigo's and Imao's.

THE PRESIDENT'S PICKS

■ ABDULMARI ASIA IMAO

Sculptor Abdulmari Asia Imao, 73, is famous for his *sarimanok* pieces in *okir* tradition. His works have placed Muslim art in mainstream consciousness.

The *sarimanok*—a bird with a fish trapped between its beak—is a significant cultural symbol among the Tausugs and Maranons in Mindanao. *Okir*, on the hand, is an art style commonly practiced in Mindanao in creating images of plants, animals, and cultural and mythical figures in their ancient epics. Made of hardwood and brass, *okir* is characterized by elaborate and curvy designs.

Imao's works can be found in the New York Museum of Modern Art and in the offices of the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas and Philippine Consulate in Los Angeles, United States, among others.



In 1963, Imao was the first Asian recipient of the New York Museum of Modern Art grant to study European and Scandinavian art. Three years later, he was chosen as one of the Ten Outstanding Young Men of the Philippines. Last year, he received the Presidential Merit Award. In 1990, he was a Para sa Sining awardee of the

Cultural Center of the Philippines.

Imao earned his degree in fine arts major in sculpture from the University of the Philippines, which in 1986 named him as its most outstanding alumnus. He also pursued graduate studies at the University of Kansas under the Fulbright-Smith-Mundt scholarship.

■ FRANCISCO "SOC" RODRIGO (1915-1998)

The late Francisco "Soc" Rodrigo's biggest contribution to Philippine art is his play, "Sa Pula, Sa Puti"—a satirical Philippine folk story written in the tradition of his hometown Bulacan's *balagtas*. His well-acclaimed translation of *Cyrano de Bergerac*—a romantic play by French poet Edmond Rostand—is still being presented.

His accomplishments as an

artist are eclipsed by his political achievements, however. Rodrigo is best remembered by most as a former senator who elevated rhetoric in the Senate to an art. One of his speeches on Catholics and politics is included the *20 Speeches That Moved the Nation*—a collection of the most significant speeches in the country's history.

Rodrigo had a short stint in radio before joining politics. He was one of the key figures in the anti-Marcos movement, who spoke against the Marcos dictatorship to EDSA.

Rodrigo earned a degree in education from the Ateneo de Manila University. One of his Jesuit teachers baptized him "Soc" for Socrates, because of his skill at rhetoric. He later finished law at the University of the Philippines. Rodrigo died of cancer in 1998. —**Carmela Fonbuena**

FPJ REALLY MADE IT



LUIS LIWANAG

THE TRUTH is, Fernando Poe Jr. really made it to the National Artists list.

After the Palace withdrew the list of winners for the Awards, pundits speculated that this had something to do with the late filmmaker, who was also the chief rival of the President in the 2004 presidential race. One version said that President Arroyo wanted to give him the award to appease his widow and supporters. The other

was that she wanted to strike him out from the list.

NEWSBREAK gathered from those involved in the selection process that Poe was nominated to the awards by two big organizations from the entertainment industry: FAMAS and MOWELFUND. The nomination papers were submitted by his good friend, actress Boots Anson Roa, shortly after he died in December 2004.

The National Artist Award secretariat at the NCCA received nominations for 16 individuals for the Film category. After the Council of Experts studied their merits, it came up with a short list of three names: Poe, Manuel Conde, and Mike de Leon. When the second-level committee of 18 members convened to vote, it was Poe who got the most among the three nominees, six votes. —**Miriam Grace A. Go**

RAMOS'S CHOICE

The National Artist Awards was created as a presidential award by virtue of Proclamation 1001, signed in April 1972. Since then, Imelda Marcos, who fashioned herself as patron of the arts, would pick the awardees after consulting with experts in the field. The first “controversy” happened when President Ferdinand Marcos himself insisted that Carlos Romulo be named National Artist against the recommendation of Imelda’s advisers.

After the fall of the Marcos dictatorship in 1986, many had thought that presidential interventions in the awarding process would cease. But in 1997, then President Ramos intervened and created an additional category—Historical Literature—to accommodate the family of historian Carlos Quirino who were Ramos’s friends.

In 1999, President Joseph Estrada proclaimed his friend Ernani Cuenco as National Artist for Music even before the CCP and the NCCA could submit the list of awardees. In 2003, President Arroyo proclaimed Roces after the awardees were named.

The Palace is invoking Section 7.7 of the revised criteria and guidelines of the National Artist Award that, “The list of honorees shall be submitted to the President of the Philippines for confirmation, proclamation, and conferral.”

Although the sentence clearly means that the President can only confirm or, implicitly, subtract names from the list, the Palace apparently exploits the lack of explicit prohibition for adding names to the list. What’s not prohibited is allowed.

Journalist Joselito Zulueta, chair of the

NCCA’s national committee on literary arts, said that it’s not only the President that politicizes the awards. Even the selection process itself is open to the lobbying of interested parties who have connections to the offices or people involved—from the documentation of the 100-plus nominees to the voting during the third and final round.

Despite this, the awards continue to provide the public guideposts as who should they

read, watch, or listen to. It helps “improve the Filipinos’ cultural literacy,” he said.

Virgilio Almario, then executive director of the NCCA, introduced the “council of peers” concept to the selection process. Now called Council of Experts, these are accomplished and respected persons in various artistic and cultural fields who evaluate the merits of nominees. The NCCA maintained a list of peers or experts for every field. Each time the awards season came (every two to three years), the names of the year’s “judges” are drawn as in a lottery.

Still, this didn’t prevent presidents from exercising their “prerogative.” Almario himself, when named National Artist for Literature in 2003, later found himself sharing the title with a backdoor entrant, Roces.

Almario is advising the NCCA to push for the law’s amendment.

Poet Ricardo de Ungria says the government should also consider giving a different set of awards, “where [presidential] prerogative is the norm and not the exception.” That way, the National Artist Award will hopefully be kept “unassailable and worthy of itself.”

But in no way should these controversies be an argument to abolish the awards, says Prof. Isagani Cruz. “It remains prestigious. It remains relevant because art, that is creativity, will save the country...Artists have changed the history of the country.” ■

WHAT DO NATIONAL ARTISTS GET?

VIRGILIO ALMARIO, dean of the University of the Philippines’ College of Arts and Letters, is known in the literary world as Rio Alma. He is a poet, literary historian, and critic. His works were recognized in 2003, when he was named National Artist for literature.

Apart from joining the roster of acclaimed Filipino artists, Almario enjoys benefits and privileges from the government. He got P100,000 at the awards presentation and, since then, has been receiving a monthly pension of P24,000. He is also entitled to medical and hospitalization benefits amounting to P750,000 a year. Other privileges include free tickets and privileged seats in state functions and cultural events.

Legal heirs of posthumous awardees are entitled to a P75,000 prize. Wilfrido Ma. Guerrero was named National Artist for theater and film in 1997, two years after he died. Last year, the National Commission on Culture and Arts (NCCA) arranged to have his remains transferred from a private lot to the Libingan ng mga Bayani. National Artists are

entitled to a state funeral and other honors when they pass away.

For both the living and deceased National Artists, the honors do not stop with the presentation of awards or the state funerals.

Arturo Luz, National Artist for visual arts, will turn 80 in November. In celebration, the NCCA will hold an exhibit of his paintings, sculptures, and designs at the Cultural Center of the Philippines. Similar celebrations are being lined up to honor deceased National Artists.

Last year, the NCCA led by its chair, Ambeth Ocampo, began offering grants of up to P1 million for cultural projects. Up to P100,000 of the grant may be used to finance a National Artist’s lectures in schools or before various groups around the country.

“Ninety percent of Filipino artists are poor,” Almario said. The benefits given to National Artists not only reflect the recognition they deserve but, perhaps, also help them to continue nurturing their gifts and thus further enrich the national heritage.

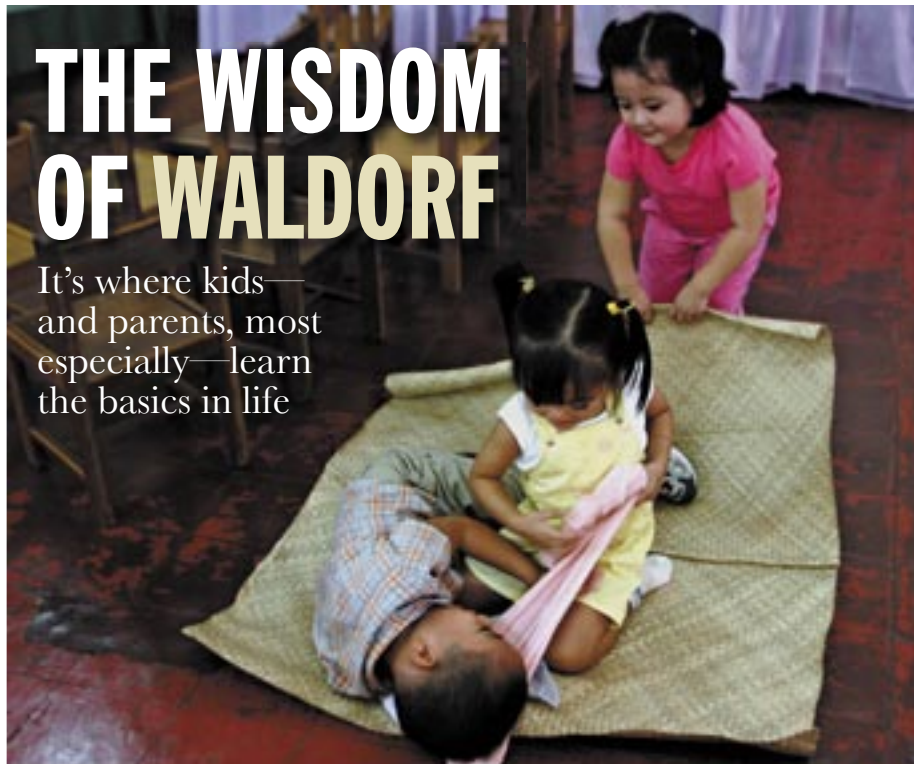
—**Carmela Fonbuena**



VIRGILIO ALMARIO

THE WISDOM OF WALDORF

It's where kids—and parents, most especially—learn the basics in life



By GLENDA M. GLORIA

IN A middle-class subdivision in Quezon City, a school that doesn't look like a school does it differently from the rest: the rooms for toddlers are patterned after homes, complete with a stove, a kitchen sink, and a dining table; chickens and roosters chirp or crow as they are fed by eager schoolchildren; boys and girls clamber up tall trees while others play *sipa*.

The scene always brings me down memory lane, to a place and time when there were no malls to conquer and no Friendster to glue a child to her seat.

Is an old-fashioned environment for kids possible in this century of blogs and 3G?

It is, at Manila Waldorf School. If you're still torn among the choices for your child's preschool, you might want to try the Waldorf way of education, which was founded in 1919 by the Austrian scientist and thinker Rudolf Steiner (<http://www.rsarchive.org/>). I did so last year, and I could say that its preschool can be quite an experience for both parents and children (Waldorf teaches grade school, too).

I first Googled my way through Waldorf (<http://www.waldorfanswers.org> or http://www.waldorflibrary.org/Journal_Articles/GW3914.pdf), thinking that all the data I'd get from the numerous Web sites would prepare me for it. Well, I got more than I bargained for. What popped up were sites that brought



me to other things and other thoughts: the teachings of Steiner, anthroposophy (www.anthroposophy.org), eurythmy (www.eurythmy.org). They all say the same: the choice that you make this early for your child has to be in sync with what you are—your view of the world, the life that you live, your habits from day to day.

Waldorf looks at a child as a whole human being, integrating her heart, hands, and head. This is what people probably mean when they describe Waldorf as a different school.

I myself had thought that the system was the same as in other preschools; I figured I could just drop off my daughter so I could go around chasing stories. No, ma'am, you have to stay.

The once-a-week "Paslitan" class for two- and three-year-olds is an adult-toddler class; a parent must be with the child for practically the whole morning every Friday because the class simulates the home where the kids play while their parents do some chores.

Sounds like a walk in the park—if your

concept of house chores is scrubbing and rearranging the furniture according to your moods. But on my first day, the teacher (or Tita as we call them) gave me a piece of cloth and a pattern on which to make an apron for my daughter. Imagine how I—an undomesticated journalist who hasn't worked with thread and needles since grade school—froze. But Waldorf teaches patience.

Three I's could sum up what I've learned from Waldorf as a mom: the power of *imitation*, *imagination*, and *individuality*.

The early childhood years are what Waldorf educators would describe as the period of "unquestioning imitation." Thus in "Paslitan," parent and child take turns in washing the dishes after a healthy *merienda* of *suman*, bread, and banana. We say grace; we don't play while eating; we finish what's on our plate. We put toys and chairs back to where we got them. Parents punctuate sentences with *po* even while talking to the children; in no time, the kids, too, say *po* effortlessly.

We're discouraged from buying stuff that stunts their imagination or toys that give them instant gratification (that saves us money, too). We're encouraged to create, such as Christmas cards from dried leaves and grass, and build, such as toys out of boxes. We're asked to junk junk food, nurture the healing capacities of our children's bodies, and do away with instant cures to their illnesses. Once, we listened to a doctor talk about the "value" of fever, and why we should not panic over it.

The modern world got us all fixated on genius toddlers, but at Waldorf, we engage our children in creative play, and free them from premature intellectual demands. The kids bake bread, color with square-sized crayons, run in the garden, play with toys made of wood, pretend to be kings and queens, and listen to stories before they end their day. Practical intelligence and concentration are thus enhanced—but at each child's own pace.

The children wear no-frills, unbranded clothes so that the journalist in me has a tough time matching some of the SUVs parked outside with who's running on the playground. They talk *sans* the *wersh-wersh* English slang, and—surprise!—they speak the local language with pride.

Indeed, Waldorf defies a lot of what we've grown to accept as norms in child rearing.

Would all this spoil your toddler's survival in the modern world, or ensure it?

It's a leap worth taking. The process of unlearning can be just as fulfilling. ■

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You may call Manila Waldorf at 414-3709 or 374-2922 for inquiries. For those living south of Manila, there's the Acacia Waldorf in Sta. Rosa, Laguna.

THE OTHERS

We might as well acknowledge how insular and racist we Pinoys are

SHEFFIELD—BEFORE I got here, I dreaded the possibility that I would be a lone brown straggler in a sea of surly white people. How comical that fear now seems. With two universities and a 40,000-strong student population from all over the world, it's a regular UN assembly down here.

Diversity began at home. My flat mates during my first year were two Brits, an Iraqi, and a Chinese. The Iraqi woman was inaccessible; I could hear her weeping at night. She left after two weeks and was replaced by a Syrian, a Catholic, who was confounded when I declined to hear Sunday mass with her. She had met devout Pinays in Syria and Kuwait and was unprepared for Filipino agnostics.

My Chinese flat mate, an MBA student called Yu, was from the yuppie legions of the mainland. She used to work in a trading company and was funding her studies out of her own pocket. In all, she spent about £25,000 or P2.5 million for her tuition, living costs, and a European tour. All this she saved within the first five years of her working life. That is how I got a real sense of China's economic boom.

Not that Yu flaunted her prosperity. Obsessively frugal, she would turn off heating in the flat during the long, nasty winter. "Did *you* turn the heater off?" I would demand of the others through my chattering teeth. "No, maybe *Yu* did!" they would say. "What do you mean *I* did?" I would retort, and so on. Eventually we figured out that it was Yu, not you, who switched the heater off when no one was looking.

In my course, the mix was equally interesting: four Brits and one each from Sri Lanka, Nigeria, Indonesia, and Leso-

tho. In my department, there are students from France, Malaysia, Kenya, Sweden, Ghana, China (again), Japan, Papua New Guinea, India, Bangladesh, Spain, Mexico. And in what is probably 300 years of Spanish colonial rule catching up with me, I found myself forming close friendships not with Asians, but with Spaniards and Hispanics. They're lively, they're emotional and we all exclaim "Ay!" when startled or disappointed.

Most students here are still British, which includes the Scots, the Welsh, and the (Northern) Irish. (Strictly speaking, Northern Ireland is not part of Great Britain but of the United Kingdom. But since there's no collective term for UK citizens, we'll just call them British.)

Often, when we say "British," we actually mean the English: white Anglo-Saxon chaps wearing tweed jackets and exclaiming "tally-ho!" in crisp BBC accents. In reality, those are caricatures of upper crust Englishmen, a few of whom I have encountered in academia but are an otherwise rare species here in the north. I've seen more of the chavs, the *jologs* of Britain. They're as

British as Prince Charles, which tells you how "British" is a murky category.

And what about regional/racial affiliations? I was surprised to discover that many Brits are hesitant to identify themselves as Europeans, other than in the obvious geographic sense. "Europe" to them is the Continent, where nasty things like the blitz and the French came from.

I, on the other hand, take pains to assert that I *am* Asian. That's because when they say "Asian" here, they mean *South* Asians (Indians, Pakistanis, etc)—not us. We are classified as "Orientals," whatever that means. I have been accosted by various characters who were

actually after Chinese students. Once, however, a sari-clad woman asked me if I was Indian. How I can belong to two distinct racial groups,

I have no idea.

Speaking of Indians, I was in London with a couple of Pinays when an Indian-looking fellow and his wife approached us and identified themselves as Pinoys ("*Pilipino kami!*"). I was startled both by the man's flawless Tagalog and the pride behind his claim. And were the young men with them Filipinos, too? I asked. He replied: "*Ay hindi, Indian 'yang mga 'yan.*" (Oh no, they're Indian.) As far as he was concerned, I was his *kababayan*, not them. That floored me completely.

A multiracial society is not something that readily comes to mind when I think of the Philip-



► **ABSURDIA**

CARLA MONTEMAYOR

pires. I wonder how we're going to deal with it given the increasing number of Chinese, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Indian, and Vietnamese migrants. Will there be more ghettos or will we attempt some degree of integration? How will we teach immigrants to be "Filipino"? To start with, we might as well acknowledge how insular and, um, racist we (native Pinoys) actually are. I mean just look at how we refer to South Asians as "Bumbay." That's not even a race, that's a city. How would we like it if Filipinos were called "Marikina"?

Nowadays I share a house with Chinese guys and an Italian, or more specifically, a Sicilian. Since we are closer in age and I have had long holidays in his country, I get along better with the Sicilian. Not that I don't have any biases against the guy: the *Godfather* theme plays in my head every time I see him. (Hollywood trumps political correctness every time.) I am also distressed by his gold necklace. I sent a text message to my sister, who used to live in Naples, opining that the man was "*Kagagaling yata sa Saudi.*" (Just returned from Saudi Arabia.) Her reply: "*Gaga!* Sicilians wear gold to ward off evil." Oops. If there is to be any harmony in this world, there also has to be a lot less ignorance. ■

If there is to be any harmony in this world, there has to be a lot less ignorance

NEW SHEEN ON SUBIC

THERE ARE two good reasons to revisit Subic these days: good food and the charming bay walk.

A row of restaurants and hotels now occupy the marina area, and a number of them offer a lush view of Subic Bay. The promenade by the bay is a favorite spot: you can watch the sunset from there, take a stroll, or just sit idly and enjoy the breeze.

Vista Marina Hotel and Resort (www.vmhote.com), at the end of Waterfront Road, has the best view of all. But book early; the rooms get easily filled up.

As for the food, I'm still gushing over Ristorante Italia. Recently, a dozen of us, all family, trooped to



GIORDANO GALANTE

the restaurant, also on Waterfront Road, and we had one of the most joyful dinners together.

For those who avoid meat, the thin-crust pizza, topped with cheese and asparagus, is a delight. The rest ordered lamb, chicken, risotto, and pasta, and they all were quite pleased.

The Italian chardonnay (P680 a bottle) which Giordano Galante, the owner, imports unwound us all. He is not allowed to sell retail, though. Galante also serves various kinds of grappa for those who like after-dinner drinks. And there's lively conversation not only about food but about his main business: Galante exports gold and diamond jewelry to Europe. But that's another story.

For restaurant reservations, call (047) 252-3189 or 0920-9621964.

—**Marites D. Vitug**

PHOTOGRAPHS BY TRIXIA CARUNGCONG



Graze in Singapore

IF YOU want to get away from the fast-paced life in Singapore's city center, head down to Rochester Park, which promises to become the island's hottest dining and lifestyle area.

One of the new restaurants there is Graze, number 4 on the row of colonial black-and-white houses surrounded by 100-year-old trees and grassy lawns. Several minutes away by car from Holland Village, a commercial enclave popular with expatriates, Graze is also a comfortable stroll from Buona Vista MRT.

Touted as the next "in" dining place in Singapore, Graze refers to "eating at a leisurely pace in relaxed surroundings." A recent visit there began promisingly enough—the ambience was refreshing and laid back, making you feel like you're chilling out in a friend's elegantly rustic home and could kick off your shoes.

The menu offers homemade cuisine with the freshest ingredients. There's a "grazing" menu for those who want to share and try out dishes in small portions.

I tried the Asian Seafood House Platter (S\$90, good for two people) with crab, tiger prawns, whole sea bass, scallops, and oysters. My friends ordered the specialty breakfasts, one for vegetarians (S\$16), with beans, onions, tomato, mushroom, eggplant, peppers, avocado

and toast; and another for meat lovers (S\$18), with sausage, smoked bacon, mushroom, tomato, hash potato, fried eggs, baked beans, and toast. The latter seemed perfect as a hearty meal to start the day or nurse a hangover.

Also among the signature dishes are king prawns done three ways: tempura, chilled, and pan tossed with coconut coriander sorbet and wagyu ox cheek, served with coconut rice, green papaya, and pomelo salad.

That afternoon, the service was a tad slow, though always courteous. When the food finally came, the Cast Iron Pans were a bit cold, with a film of oil covering the ingredients.

The seafood platter also fell short of expectations. The crab and prawns seemed like they had overstayed their welcome in the fridge, though the sea bass tasted fresh with a hint of lemon and chili.

Graze is barely a month old, and it seems the kitchen is still having its teething problems. The staff also appears to be struggling to find their rhythm.

Perhaps, given time, Graze will be able to live up to its hype as the next big thing in Singapore's dining scene.

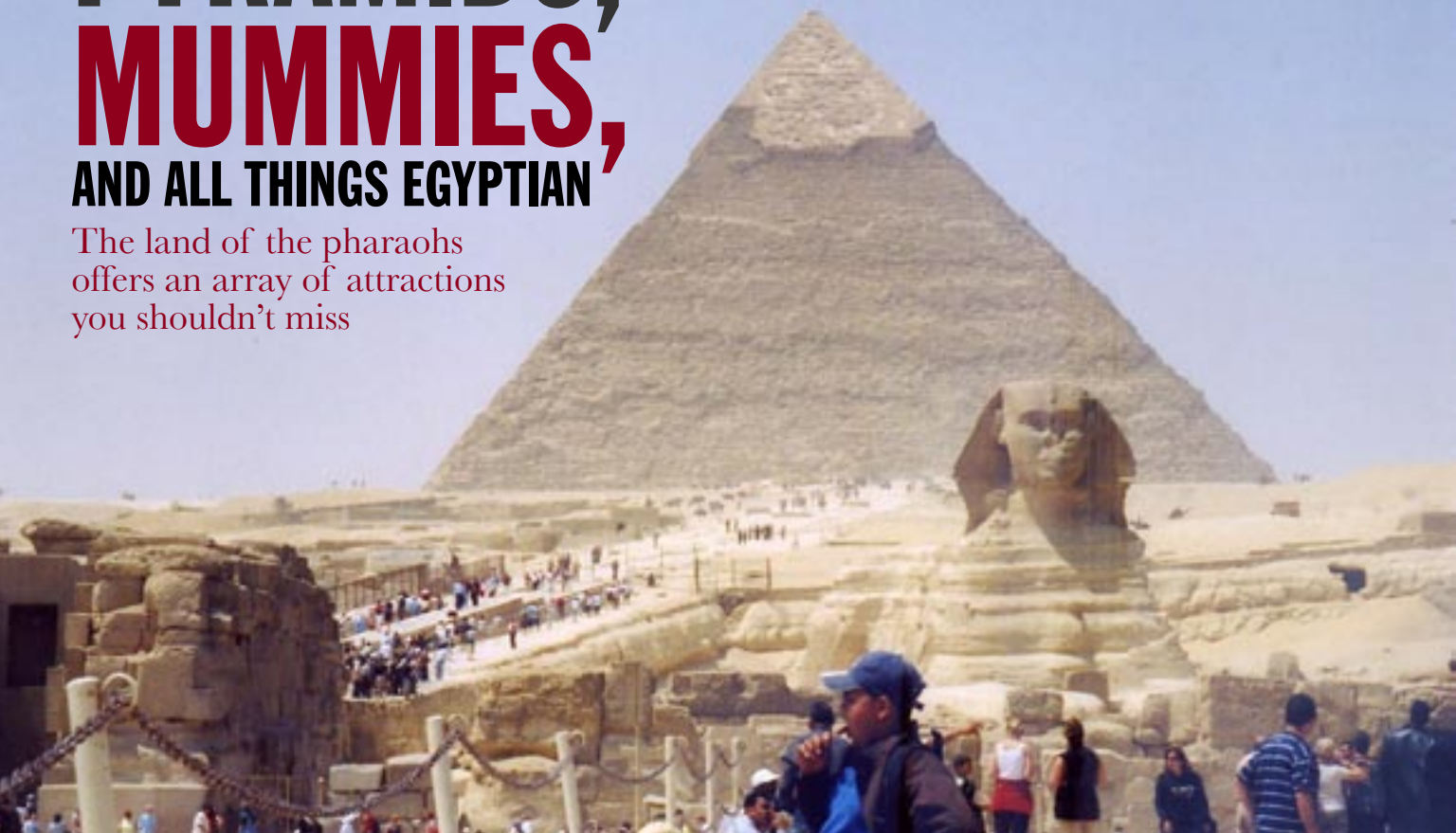
For reservations, call (65) 6775 9000. They're open for dinner Tuesday to Sunday from 6 p.m. to midnight, and during weekends, breakfast and brunch are served from 9 a.m. Check them out online at www.graze.sg.

—**Trixia E. Carungcong**



PYRAMIDS, MUMMIES, AND ALL THINGS EGYPTIAN

The land of the pharaohs offers an array of attractions you shouldn't miss



By EILEEN PAAT

CAIRO, THE Pyramids at Giza, the Sphinx, Tutankhamen's treasures—they were the stuff that my childhood dreams were made of. So I woke up early in my little hotel near the Nile River, raring to spend my first day in Egypt.

After a hurried but delicious breakfast, I boarded the mini-van that took myself, a Swedish couple, and two Canadian siblings to our first stop in our eight-day tour of Egypt: the Pyramids at Giza.

Egypt has what I'd call "must-not-miss" attractions: Pyramids at Giza, including the Sphinx; Egyptian Museum; Abu Simbel monuments, at the border between Egypt and Libya; Temple of Isis, Philae Island; a felucca ride up the Nile River; Valley of the Kings and Valley of the Queens, Luxor; and the Temple at Karnak.

These can be capped by half a day's shopping at the ancient Khan-El-Khalili bazaar in downtown Cairo and, time permitting, a visit to the Coptic Church, built over the cave where the Holy Family sup-

posedly stayed on their flight to Egypt to flee Herod's men; and a visit to the Great Conqueror Saladin's Citadel.

The Pyramids of Giza stand on a plateau overlooking the desert city of Cairo. This summer morning, the desert is hot, dry, and humid. Sand gets into your eyes, on your hair, on the furniture, everywhere in Cairo. Residents say that it's hard to keep dwellings free of sand, for the desert winds blow the miniscule particles into every nook and cranny of the city. This is also why Cairo's buildings are grey or brown. Anything painted brighter than that would turn grey or brown in a couple of years like the wind-swept pyramids of Giza.

Three pyramids stand near each other on the plateau: the so-called Great Pyramid of



Khufu (Pharaoh Cheops); the Pyramid of Khafre, Khufu's son; and the Pyramid of Menkaure, Khafre's son.

MOST PHOTOGRAPHED

We disembarked at the base of Khufu's pyramid and gazed at its massive height (481 feet high). Our guide, Salem, said it is prohibited to climb up the sides of the pyramid. Looking up at the gargantuan size of each block of granite that makes up the structure, I wouldn't even dream of going up.

Moving a little around the Great Pyramid and a museum beside it (which houses a 5,000 year-old Egyptian wooden boat that used to carry the dead pharaohs along the

more famous museums in the world.

I took the long train ride to Abu Simbel—14 hours by overnight train, and another four hours by mini-van, escorted by a military convoy across the desert of southern Egypt.

WILD RIDE TO ABU SIMBEL

Abu Simbel is composed of two great rock temples carved out of the side of a hill overlooking Lake Nasser in the 13th century B.C. during the reign of Pharaoh Ramesses II, as a monument to himself and his favored wife Nefertari. Declared by UNESCO a World Heritage Site, the temples were relocated 65 meters higher and 200 meters back from the rising waters of the lake as a result



Nile to their final resting place), we reached the pyramid of Khafre. Although 10 feet shorter than Khufu's, Khafre's pyramid stands on a little hill behind his father's, generating the illusion of being taller. A side entrance, about 38 feet above the base, allowed visitors to view the chambers beneath.

Boarding our van again, we took a short trip to the Sphinx at the back of Khafre's pyramid. Half man and half the body of a lion, the Sphinx is the most photographed landmark of Egypt, probably as much as the Giza pyramids. It is said that Khafre had ordered the Sphinx to be built, aligned with his pyramid. Khafre never managed to see the Sphinx completed, nor did all the other pharaohs who had their own pyramids built.

We spent the afternoon on an educational tour of the Egyptian Museum. Located in downtown Cairo, in the upmarket Zamalek area, the Egyptian Museum is one of the

of the construction of the Aswan Dam in the sixties, in a monumental US\$36-million effort. On the way back to Aswan, one must visit the beautiful Temple of Isis, on the island of Philae also a major relocation work of UNESCO.

A FELUCCA RIDE

Another thing that shouldn't be missed is a felucca ride on the Nile. A felucca is a motor-less sailboat that glides smoothly up and down the Nile with the help of wind currents.

My experience was going upriver from a point after Aswan going to a place right before Luxor. You might want to try spending a night or two on a felucca. At night, you can lie back and watch the stars overhead while you sleep on the felucca's deck. Just make sure that you pack a warm coat or two, because of the temperature drops in the evening. ■



HOW TO GET THERE

GETTING TO Egypt need not dig a hole in your pocket. OneWorld Tours (e-mail: sales@oneworldtours.co.uk; Web site: www.oneworldtours.co.uk) offers budget and mid-priced tour packages, with diverse itineraries.

Direct all inquiries to Managing Director Stuart Cheese, and if you mention reading about OneWorld through my article, they promised to grant a 25-percent discount on your tour packages.

Perk up your knowledge of Egypt's historical attractions; www.guardians.net/egypt is the most informative and useful.

You might also want to grab the latest edition of Lonely Planet on Egypt. Its online site has a "Message Board" called "Thorn Tree," where you can post questions on how to go about preparing a trip to Egypt. You get a host of answers from specialists in the field, "professional backpackers," and a travel agency or two.

To supplement your tour agency's package tour rates, visit www.toureygypt.net. It provides informative articles on tourism, culture and the arts, and practical tips about traveling in Egypt. Also bound to .

Lastly, for single, independent, women travelers, dress up conservatively, most preferably in long pants or skirts, and shirts with medium or long sleeves. Avoid excessive display of skin and do expect that, if you are a woman traveling alone, you might sometimes encounter the stares and hoots of amorous Egyptian men. Personally, I consider that as part of the traveling experience. — **Eileen Paat**

A former journalist in Manila, the author, single and loving every moment of it, works for a global communications company in Bangkok. She spends her free time traveling to exotic places.

PREJUDICE AND PRIDE



TACKLING DISCRIMINATION: Bart Guingona of Pagbabago, Amina Rasul of the Philippine Council for Islam & Democracy, Cynthia Bautista of Pulse Asia, Bukidnon Rep. Nerius Acosta, and Defense Undersecretary Ernesto Carolina.

INHUMANE PRISON treatment, warrantless arrests, and unequal job opportunities are just some of the prejudicial acts against Muslims in the country. A March 2005 Pulse Asia survey revealed that 44 percent of Filipino adults have anti-Muslim biases. Surprisingly, only 14 percent of these people have had direct contacts with Muslims.

Mario Taguiwalo of pagbabago@pilipinas Foundation Inc. said that discrimination happens because it is an easy answer to a complicated problem. Issues on discrimination were discussed in the forum “Prejudice and Pride: a Roundtable Series Against Intolerance and Discrimination,” held last April 20. The forum marked the formal launch of a six-month roundtable series to understand and address the sources of discrimination.

The following were the key points raised during the forum:

- The Muslim-Christian conflict was also caused by conflicts in social status, particularly between the rich and the poor, said Dr. Klaus Preschle, country representative of the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung.
- With regard to prejudices and discrimination, Filipinos have the “it’s not my problem” mentality, said Preschle. Thus, Sen. Francis “Kiko” Pangilinan urged everyone to be more sensitive to one another.



NO TO INTOLERANCE: Felipe Miranda of Pulse Asia, Steve Rood of Asia Foundation, and former Constitutional Commissioner Florangel Braid



SPECIAL GUEST:
Sen. Francis Pangilinan

• The media have played an important role in shaping the public’s perception of Muslims. Ironically, it was the negative portrayal of Muslims in the media that pushed them to the borders of terrorism, said Amina Rasul of the Philippine Council for Islam and Democracy.

• Military superseded government presence in Muslim towns.

Instead of government projects, soldiers were present in large numbers.

• Education is a major factor in creating equal footing for Christians and Muslims. Hence, educational opportunities should be provided to all.

University of the Philippines Prof. Felipe Miranda posed the question: how can Muslims and Christians not live together? After all, with such a small space, both are bound to interact with one another.

The conveners of the event included Rasul, Preschle, Pangilinan, Rep. Neric Acosta of the 1st District of Bukidnon, Dr. Steven Rood (Asia Foundation), Gil de los Reyes (National Caucus for the Politics of Renewal), Undersecretary Ernesto Carolina (Department of National Defense), Ibrahim Paglas III, Datu Mike Mastura, Datu Zamzamin Ampatuan (all of the National Anti-Poverty Commission), Glenda Gloria (NEWSBREAK), Maria Ressa (ABS-CBN), and Isagani Yambot (*Philippine Daily Inquirer*). —**Abigail Kwok**

su | do | ku

© Puzzles by Pappocom

SUDOKU PUZZLES are 9x9 grids of numbers, subdivided into 3x3 blocks. When you begin a puzzle, some of the numbers are already filled in, and you have to fill in the blank squares using logic. You must fill the grid so that all the numbers 1-9 appear in each row, column and 3x3 box. However, no row, column or 3x3 box may have two of the same number.

Sudoku puzzles first appeared in New York in the late 1970’s under the title “Number Place”. They were introduced to Japan in 1984 where they were renamed to Sudoku (pronounced sue-do-koo; su = number, doku = single), so su-doku translates as “single number”.

The goal of Sudoku is to fill all the blank squares in the grid with the correct numbers.

How do you know which numbers to place in the empty squares? That’s the fun part! Using logic and deduction, you

can always work out which numbers go in which squares.

Now for the rules:

All columns, rows and 3x3 blocks must contain all the numbers 1-9, however they can be in any order, and they do not have to sum up to anything.

Even though Sudoku puzzles use numbers, it has nothing to do with maths at all, you could substitute the numbers for anything, even pretty pictures.

The numbers must be unique.

Columns, rows and 3x3 blocks must not contain any duplicate numbers.

2		5			1			6
						9		
	3			4	5			
			6	9		1		4
	8						9	
4		6		1	3			
			5	8			7	
		7						
9			3			2		1

HARD

ANSWERS NEXT ISSUE

1

A BOUQUET OF POIGNANT TALES

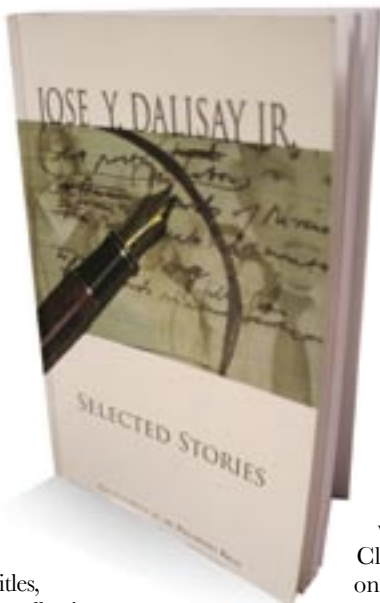
SELECTED STORIES

BY JOSE Y. DALISAY JR.

University of the Philippines Press, 2005

IN THE book's preface, the author talks about a "blessed and bountiful" day in July 1984 when he wrote the first two stories in this collection—"Kiss Me Goodbye," written in the morning, and "Message to Zenocrate," in the afternoon. The latter is the author's personal favorite; the first is mine.

"Kiss Me Goodbye" tells the story of a man who visits a cheap bar in Cubao every payday to have his life's pleasure. It's a sad and absorbing introduction to the 12 short stories compiled in the book. The stories, except for three titles, have been published in earlier collections.



The author does not tell you how the character feels. You decide. "Woman in a Box" tells about a wrong body brought home from Jeddah. You can sympathize with the aggrieved family for the loss, or you can blame the consul for his carelessness that caused more inconvenience and pain to the family. The author's eye for detail allows readers to see mundane situations in a new light. There's a lot to feel in every story. Allow yourself time to reflect after each one.

For those who are turned off by stories that talk of periods unfamiliar, this collection is relatively contemporary. His women are not Maria Claras and his Ybarra is no one like Rizal's. His women are your typical *halo-halo* vendor

or the *probinsyana* who finds herself with an older man—not necessarily dirty—for survival or for love, you decide. In several stories, characters are portrayed through the observant eyes of adolescent boys who read the Hardy Boys and desire older women. These three types are the recurring characters in this collection.

In "Sarcophagus," read a professor's mind as he dreams of going beyond his history lessons to examining Egyptian artifacts. In "Under the Dinosaurs," the narrator has the voice of an American war veteran visiting the Philippines. It can be confusing at first, knowing that you are reading a book by a Filipino. But the character is so convincingly fleshed out that the reader is able to get over the initial confusion and disbelief.

Do not expect happy endings in this collection. But have fun getting to know a fancy and charmed pig in "Pig," even if, on the whole, it's a sad tale. This pig with the most formidable tusks—"curled twice over"—in the forest is determined to survive in his threatened riverbank.

—Carmela Fonbuena

STRAIGHT FROM THE AUTHOR

WHERE DOES he get his inspiration? Prizewinning writer Jose "Butch" Dalisay Jr., also an editorial consultant of NEWSBREAK, wrote to Carmela Fonbuena about his work:

How do story inspirations come to you usually?

I never begin stories with big ideas in mind—not "poverty, justice, freedom" or any of those, as important as they are. I think of objects—a coconut, a fountain pen, a funeral wreath. Stories can take a long time to gestate in my mind but once begun can take shape quickly. I think stories first happen in the gut, not in the mind.

Have you ever had writer's

block? How is it and how do you deal with it?

Sure. I've had long dry spells, at least as far as fiction is concerned. I live with it, telling myself that I'm gathering material.

Is there a writer you look up to? Why?

In this country? Gregorio Brillantes. A fabulous mind, pellucid prose, a very fine sensibility—all of which he can apply as deftly to metaphysical questions as to our most sordid physical and political realities.

What goals, if any, have you set to achieve as a writer?

To write well, and write clearly. To write more, and more sensibly, before I croak.



Can you tell us about the novel that you are writing? What is it about and when can we expect it?

It's stuck in limbo. I'm afraid I may have lost the heart for it, or the narrative

thread. But, hey, it took me 11 years to do one story ("Voyager"). I'll get back to it when I feel a tingle in my bones again.

You said you considered "Woman in a Box" to be an introduction to your novel. Does the short story give hints on what your novel is about?

The novel was supposed to be a dark comedy about OFWs, and the story shows you how dark and how comic the novel might have been or could yet be.

Did you impose on yourself any "technical challenge" in doing your novel?

It should read well and ring true. That's all I ever demand of anything I write. ■



President Arroyo, Lipa City Mayor Vilma Santos, and Batangas Gov. Armand Sanchez

FAMILY AFFAIR

IN BATANGAS, word has it that Lipa City Mayor **Vilma Santos** has agreed to run for governor in 2007. Concerned citizens are rejoicing, primarily because they think it's only Ate Vi who can beat their governor in the polls.

The bustling province is being run by Gov. Armand Sanchez, who's been the subject of various graft cases pending with the Ombudsman. Ms. Santos, on the other hand, has been commended with the way she's brought efficiency to Lipa's city government, and made Lipa an investor-friendly locality.

There are, however, two things that May-

or Vi has to work out before aiming at the governorship: talk to her brother-in-law, the incumbent vice governor Richard Recto, who's widely perceived to be angling for Sanchez's position.

Then there's her husband, Sen. Ralph Recto, who's running for reelection in 2007. Remember that Ralph won as senator in 2001 by a hair's breadth. That means that he may have some real campaigning and tight vote guarding to do next year. How can the family be minding a gubernatorial and a senatorial race at the same time? ■

MAYUGA'S COMPROMISES

WHAT MAKES **Vice Admiral Mateo Mayuga** think that he can draft a secret, ambiguous report and get away with it?

For dragging his feet and coming up with ho-hum recommendations, Mayuga earned his reward long before disclosing a summary of his findings about the alleged involvement of military officers in the last presidential elections. He was appointed Navy chief in December last year, a move that prematurely retired his predecessor, Ernesto de Leon, who still had at least four months remaining in his term.

At the time, Mayuga was seen as the "lesser evil" of the choices for the top Navy post. Had De Leon been allowed to finish his term this summer, Mayuga would have been out of the race, because major service commanders should have at least one year remaining in service at

the time of their appointment to a new position (Mayuga retires in December).

The "reformists" in the Navy had lobbied for him since they wanted to prevent the controversial Rear Admiral Tirso Danga from becoming Navy chief;

Danga was the chief of

the Intelligence Service of the Armed Forces of the Philippines whose men allegedly taped the "Hello, Garci" conversations.

Is this the reason Mayuga's hands are tied in the face of reports that these "reformists" were involved in a plot to oust the President last February?

Now there's wild talk that Mayuga may yet be the dark horse for the position of chief of staff when Gen. Generoso Senga retires in July. Some officer-lobbyists would rather have Mayuga, who had cleared Army chief Lt. Gen. Hermogenes Esperon in the "Hello, Garcia" scandal, than Esperon himself. Mayuga's the "lesser evil" again, we suppose.

Indeed, the admiral has come a long way from his stint at the AFP Civil Relations Service, where he always dutifully performed his task of giving away press releases and "gifts" to reporters. ■



MS. INFLUENTIAL WIFE

THIS WIFE has been giving one Cabinet secretary some sleepless nights.

Although competent and professional, Mr. Cabinet Secretary wouldn't have gotten the post without the backing of one of the President's key allies—a backer who is blessed (depending on where you sit) with a charming but domineering wife.

Perhaps as an act of gratitude, Mr. Secretary promoted a close relative of his backer's wife as soon as he assumed the helm of the department. But Ms. Influential Wife is obviously not content. She's reportedly lobbying on behalf of certain companies for two major contracts that need the department's approval.

Mr. Secretary's sleepless nights began when he couldn't give in to the wishes of Ms. Influential Wife. She picked one from her pack of cheerleaders in the media to demolish Mr. Secretary on the radio. Then, Mr. Secretary started reading nasty columns about himself in a newspaper column.

When Mr. Secretary went to his backer to complain, Mr. Influential Husband reportedly told him, in so many words, that while he could accomplish a lot of difficult things, reining her in wasn't one of them. ■

NAMES A-FLOATING FOR 2007

THE CURRENT noise on charter change hasn't stopped the chatter on who's going to run in next year's senatorial and local elections. After all, without this cha-cha distraction, the wannabes should already be starting their unofficial campaign by next month.



SEN. LITO LAPID

We hear, for example, that Sen. **Lito Lapid** is thinking of challenging Makati City Mayor Jojo Binay. A former governor who still lists Pampanga as his official address, Lapid may not have problems establishing residency in Makati. He is said to have bought a house near Magallanes Village.

Lapid has nothing to lose if he tries. In case of defeat, he remains a senator, since his term ends in 2010. If he wins, well, he'll be making history as the first politician to have ended Binay's rule.

In Quezon City, there are speculations that TV host **Kris Aquino** might be interested in running for congresswoman of the 1st district, where her parents have a house on Times Street.

Before Holy Week, blind items about a congressman who allegedly sexually

harassed a member of his staff were all over showbiz columns in newspapers. The unnamed congressman was, however, identifiably Bingbong Crisologo of Quezon City's 1st district, and the alleged victim, we hear, is getting some help from people closely identified with the TV host.

Whatever happened to Kris's plan to run for mayor of Makati? Too early to tell.

Farther North, in Bulacan, former three-term governor **Roberto Pagdanganan**

is making a comeback. He will be up against Rep. Willie Alvarado and Board Member Jonjon Mendoza, the brother of outgoing Gov. Josie

dela Cruz, who was incidentally Pagdanganan's protégé.

Pagdanganan is returning to the provincial scene after two failed bids for a Senate seat.

South of Metro Manila, in Cavite, former environment undersecretary **Manny de Castro** is said to be eyeing the congressional seat in the 3rd district. De Castro is the brother of a councilor in Silang, the vote-rich town in the district. So will that assure him some leverage?

Let's see. He will be running against the incumbent, Boying Remulla, who comes from the most formidable political family in the province. And as far as voters' loyalty to the



ROBERTO PAGDANGANAN



KRIS AQUINO

Remullas in past elections is concerned, it's always been strongest in the 3rd district.

De Castro is close to former environment secretary and now presidential chief of staff Mike Defensor, so that's probably the "pull" that he's counting on.

In Laguna, the name of vice governor **Edwin Olivares** is being floated to challenge the incumbent governor, Teresita "Ningning" Lazaro. We don't see the point to rush this possible face-off between the 2004 runningmates. Teresita, if she runs and wins a reelection in 2007, will be serving for one last term. Olivares, the son of former Parañaque mayor Pablo Olivares, is only on his first term and has plenty of time to wait it out. ■

THE OTHER FIRST LADY

HE'S A dreaded local executive, she's under his employ. He dips his hands into illegal activities, she throws her weight around at the capitol.

In his province, he's hated by a few politicians but loved by many others who partake of his largesse. At the capitol, she's called The Other First Lady.

Just recently, he fired a capitol employee, who reportedly drank one too many one night and started talking about her.

The rest of local officialdom are not protesting. Why should they? He bought them free drinks and women at a pricey bar near the airport in Manila one weekend. ■

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